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THRILLING WESTERN MAGAZINE

The Big Question Was Who Would Be The Corpse At

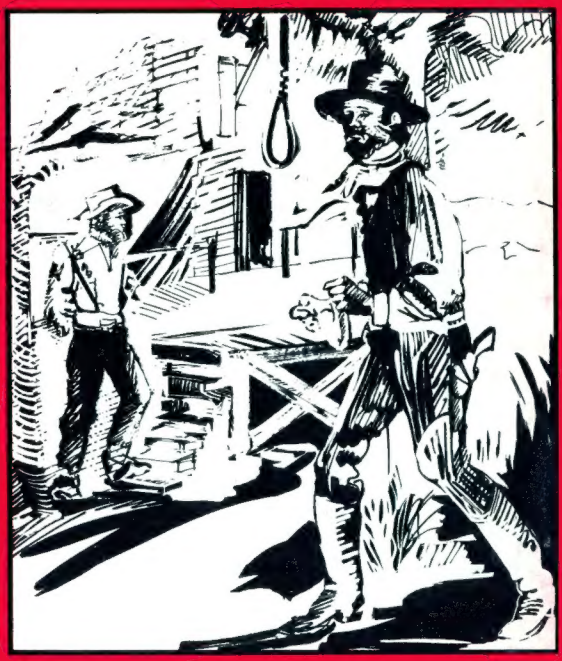
HELL HOGAN'S FUNERAL

Handcuffed To An Outlaw, It Was

THE LADY OR THE TRIGGER

Just A Pooch – Then He Met A

WOLF



A Classic Tale Of The Old West

THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP

by BRET HARTE

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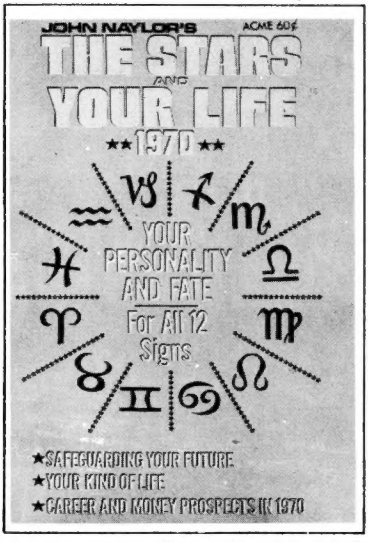

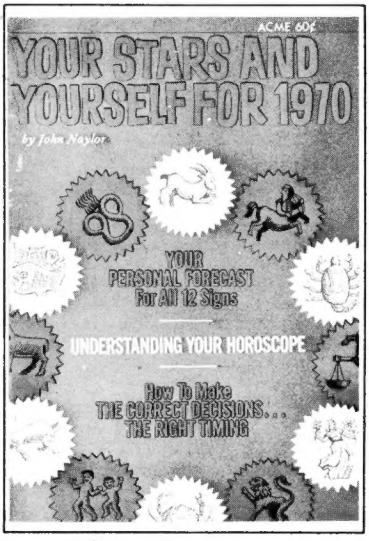

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Volume 1 *Number 6*

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, **Editor**

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The Stockade

Elsewhere, I have written at length about an important definition of fiction received in a writing course some years back, given by the late Professor William Mowrey at New York University – *circa* 1946 to be exact: "A story is a marshalling and mastering of emotions, not a marshalling and mastering of facts."

This does not mean that a story should have no facts in it whatsoever – that would be quite impossible when you come to think of it – or again that the writer of fiction should be entirely unconcerned with the facts of the background in which his story takes place, or again known facts about history, about historical characters who may appear either onstage or offstage, or again about human beings in general. It does mean that the facts in a story are not the whole story, as should be the case with journalism.

Not, as I stated before, that journalism is unconcerned with emotion – after all, you cannot write true accounts of what has happened without considering both general areas of emotion and specific areas of individual feelings – but here it is the facts that are of the greatest importance. Journalism can give either a brief closeup or an extended birds-eye view of something that happened, and the more complete and accurate the facts are, the better journalism any exhibit is, but there's a wide area which the journalist has to skimp at the very best. The most accurate and trustworthy account you may read in a newspaper or news magazine giving an extended profile cannot tell you how a person involved in the events truly felt or what lay behind this person's feelings, except in very rare exceptions where a participant describes his feelings – and even then, there are limitations. Few of us are capable of describing our feelings with genuine factual accuracy and few of us are aware of our real feelings as opposed to our rationalizations of them. That is just one reason why so much human behavior appears to be irrational and inexplicable, senseless, etc. It seems comprehensible up to a point, but sooner than anyone likes to admit we come in to the area of "I don't know why I did that" or said that.

More than this, for the most part journalism can only offer a brief section, a slice of the picture. There is no real beginning and no real conclusion and the end is often little more than a stopping point. If the reporter has given us a conscientious and accurate story (and a large number of accounts one reads in the papers are deficient in one or the other, or both) what we have before us may be reliable so far as it goes, but it seldom goes far enough to tell it as it really was. That is why, for example, two or three parties involved can give such fantastically different accounts of a battle that the reader is likely to decide that someone must be a liar or suffering from delusions – and yet, all may be telling the simple truth as each saw it. (We don't know for sure *yet* who fired

the first shot at Lexington in 1775. When I went to school, it was simple: the British opened fire. But now there's considerable debate, both from American and British historians, on the point. It seems very likely that some colonist jumped the gun, or accidently touched his musket off due to quite understandable nervousness. And so it goes.)

But the fiction writer has a great advantage over the journalist. Out of the chaos and muddle of events as they are he can build an orderly, worked-out story with a beginning, a middle, and an end; and while the facts (the events) have to come out, he is not confined and restricted by the limitations of an honest reporter trying to get an accurate story. The reporter, at best, can do no more than record what a person involved actually said. The writer of fiction can record what the person should have said in that sort of situation, as colored by the specific individual conditions unique to this situation with this person as he really is in it. Where in factual life, you or I may not know why we said this or that, instead of what we feel we should have said, the fiction writer can put the words we should have said into our mouths at the right time. In actual life, our responses are often inappropriate to what is actually going on now; in fiction, the character's response can be entirely appropriate. As any of us actually are, we have our areas of inconsistency and self-contradiction (at least on the surface of things); in fiction, a character can be entirely consistent. In short, fiction allows us the opportunity to put emotions and events in order, while actuality is filled with sound and fury often signifying little or nothing to many of us.

I was moved to explore this subject by reading about the career of a writer who

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was once immensely popular: Francis Brett Harte.

There is not now and never was any doubt about his talent, and he had things going for him which you do not often find in the biographies of famous authors. Born in Albany, New York, in 1836, the son of a schoolteacher, young Harte lived in an atmosphere of encouragement for a writer. His father had a good library, and since the boy was pretty much confined by ill health between the ages of six and ten, he had ample opportunity for reading. His father encouraged and aided his literary interests and ambitions, and he saw a poem of his published in the *NEW YORK SUNDAY ATLAS* when he was eleven. He worked in a lawyer's office and in the accounting department of a merchant. When he was sixteen, he went to California where he was a printer, then taught school, may have done a bit of mining on a claim which failed to pan out, worked in a mint, and finally got a job as a typesetter for the *GOLDEN ERA* in San Francisco, at which time he started to contribute stories and poems to various magazines. It was at this point, in 1857, that he settled upon his writing name: Bret Harte.

He had a flair for satire, and *THE CALIFORNIAN* published his *Condensed Novels and Other Papers,* which were parodies of various contemporary writers. It was through such practice that he achieved his characteristic brevity, for even the longer of his short stories (we'd call them novelets today) do not come to anything more than a fraction of the length that other writers of the period would have employed in telling the same story.

He gained a considerable local reputation; then, in 1868, a man named Anton Roman hired him to edit a new magazine, the *OVERLAND MONTHLY.* The first issue was dated July, and it is said that it was through Harte's

"characteristic dilatoriness" that he did not have anything of his own in the first issue. The second issue, August 1868, made up for it: he contributed a short story, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, and that was the beginning of a national and soon an international reputation. Then in the September 1870 issue, he was faced (as every editor is faced frequently) with some blank space that had to be filled as the issue was closed. He did what innumerable other editors have done, and still do: he slipped in something of his own to fill up the space – that's why such short items are referred to as "fillers" – and this filler turned out to be the most famous in the history of American letters of the 19th century: it was a poem, entitled *Plain Language from Truthful James.* Wallace Stegner says of it in his introduction to the very fine collection of Harte's tales, *The Outcasts of Poker Flat and Other Stores* (published by Signet): "That went off in the public's face like a firecracker; it shook men down in laughter all across the country, was reprinted in numberless newspapers, pasted in barbershop windows, committed to memory. It has been seriously suggested that no single work ever made a writer so famous." Well, perhaps; but if this is an exaggeration, it is not the kind which gives a false impression. *The Raven* made Edgar Allen Poe world-famous, but far more so abroad than at home, and this came toward the end of his life, while Harte's poem brought fame early in his career.

The difference is that Poe's fame has endured and his reputation increased (even though he is still less highly regarded in his native land than abroad) and Bret Harte is now regarded as rather second rate, when compared to the giants of literature. And, in fact, this was, in a sense his high point. It is said that when he came East in 1871, to

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accept an offer of $10,000 a year from the *ATLANTIC MONTHLY* for whatever verses and stories he chose to write, his procession across the continent was a triumph that outshone General Grant's after the end of the Civil War. The high point lasted for a few years – and then came the decline. The *ATLANTIC MONTHLY* did not renew the contract. And for the rest of his life, he would find his fame preceding him the farther he went from home, but collapsing behind him.

So long as the public before him was insulated from the facts about the West of which he wrote, Bret Harte was the greatest; but when other (and more authentic)Western material began to reach England and other places where his fame had spread, Harte's stories had to take a back seat. His stories were regarded as tiresomely sentimental, and there was strong objection to his "unmoral treatment of immoral subjects." (Interestingly, there were local objections to *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in respect to immorality and profanity even in 1868 when it first appeared. Harte just wasn't accepted as a prophet by the people around him where he lived.)

He tried to write about other subjects and found that it all came out flat; all he could tackle was stories laid in the background of the West of his own days in California, and he only had but a few stories to tell even of that; they became repetitions in slightly different combinations. He went abroad in 1878 and never returned; there was no longer any market for him at home. He writes in a letter in 1885: ". . . I was told that Mr. Sargent, of California, while Minister to Germany, intimated . . . that he was surprised at my German reputation, as I was completely 'played out' in America."

It's a strange, and somewhat sad story – but the strangest part is yet to come.

The sad part relates to the fact that, while to the person outside, Harte's stories seem splendidly realistic accounts of life as it actually was in the old West of the 50's and 60's; journalism and history shows that Harte really knew very little of what he was writing about. Careful research has shown that his observations of the country, of Gold Rush life, of the society, and of actual persons around him were far from accurate; and the stories of his having been a miner, a stagecoach guard, or an Indian fighter melt away into legend. It was when the folk back East began to read faithful accounts of life in the mines, etc., accurate observations and descriptions of geographical scenes, that Harte's stories began to lose their appeal. You can't actually pin down any of his colorful-seeming locales, critics said; mining life really wasn't like that; and his characters are not characteristic. They're caricatures, stereotypes, based upon occupation.

One can carry the charge of charlatanism too far. Surely Harte, who was a city man, not a man who lived in the wilds, nonetheless saw a vast range of colorful and authentic individuals and listened to them talk. But what he did when he wrote a story was to construct a parody of what he had observed, out of his imagination. It is like the anecdote about the entomolgy professor whose students tried to play a trick on him. They took various parts of various insects and glued them together, winding up with a truly fabulous and fearsome-looking creature, then ran breathlessly to the teacher with their composite in a box saying how they'd just captured it and could he tell them what it was. The good professor examined the exhibit, looked thoughtful, and asked, "Tell me – did it hum when you caught it?" "Yes – it did!" was the reply. "Ah-ha," declared the savant triumphantly, "I was right. It's a humbug!"

Now it would seem that this account seems to be contradicting the thesis I started out with, since we see that Harte's reputation fell to pieces amongst discriminating readers when it became apparent that his stories were far from factual in background. But bear with me, for I believe that what this proves is that Harte's reputation among the literate was largely based upon what seemed to be excellent journalism. While *all* of his stories may not seem to us to be much too sentimental, or otherwise offensive, the elements which the educated did not care for did tend to increase, while what at first seemed to be of value turned out to be fool's gold.

He was very heavily influenced by Dickins, and critics have said that his stories are to a very large extent Dickins stories grafted on to a pseudo-Western setting. To the extent that this is true, it's unfortunate, for he seems to have taken over the great English author's weaker, rather than stronger points. Dickins' sentimentality can be annoying.

But what *is* this element we call "sentimentality"? What's wrong with it? I think Oscar Wilde gave the best definition of sentimentality when he described it as the *counterfeit* of emotion. In sentimental moments, we enjoy the luxury of emotions without accepting the responsibilities which accompany them when properly expressed. Sentimentality is a gesture; momentarily it may do the same things that real love would do – but it's a very temporary and uncommitted thing. Love endureth all things; sentiment retires quickly when things get inconvenient, and we see there was nothing solid there after all – just as a counterfeit dollar bill can pass until someone starts to examine it closely. And the sentimentalist (or the person acting on sentiment, rather than

turn to page 118

Hell Hogan's Funeral

by CLEE WOODS

Hell Hogan had planted many a man before he came to Burro Gap, to take the place over. But when that parson came in, he realized what he'd been missing. Fortunately, there was one more name on Hogan's little list — so this victim would have the grandest funeral folk ever saw in these parts, and the whole town would participate.

IF ANY OF YOU FELLERS was ever in Burro Gap durin' that gold rush we had, then yuh'll remember how Mike Mahoney called his dump the Blood Keg 'fore the vigilantes swung Mike and put the place outa business.

And the Blood Keg shore was a fittin' place for the beginnin' of Hell Hogan's funeral. Hell Hogan called hisself that 'cause he claimed he come into the world in a Navaho hogan and meant to go out by way of the place givin' rise to the first half of his handle.

We're playin' jest a little friendly game of stud poker in the back end of the Blood Keg, me—my name's Arch Tincher—and four other cowpokes which ain't too crazy to throw 'way their thirty per on no slickers, when in rambles Hell Hogan. He takes only two fingers at the bar, for he never gets drunk, then comes clinkin' his spurs on back for our table.

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He is a slim, lean human maverick, with gray eyes that look snaky like a diamond-back's in dog days. Jest built to throw a six-gun ef a hombre ever was. And he shore has throwed 'em, 'cordin' to all evidence. Most of said evidence bein' a little private boneyard of his own he'd started off to itself beyondst Boot Hill, out of jealousy of the place other gun-slingers put their targets.

In this graveyard of Hell Hogan's is four Mexicans side by side, which same started the institooshun when its promoter cut them down in a pile when they charged 'im right there outside the Blood Keg. After them, Hogan added three more unlucky gents in six weeks.

And he does it with sech a fine taste for show, too. Each killin' turns out to be grander than the last. Hell Hogan likes to let his men know in advance what's comin'. The last killin' he done he invites everybody to see him drill his man, which he does so fast

that we wonders who'll be the next to commit suicide by crossin' our most celebrated citizen.

He is so all-fired proud of the way he kills that he gives a victim an even break, even when his real coward's soul wants to take the advantage. This, yuh see, adds to the glory of the way he does it and at the same time keeps him from bein' jerked up by the law which is jest beginnin' to be felt on our range. But most of all, he is proud of his six-gun art.

Tommy Hayden sized it up about right one day to me when he allows, "Hell Hogan would actually risk his own life with a fast gunman, jest for the glory he thinks it'd bring ef he did win. He would win too, for they's nobody fast as him, and nobody loves six-gun glory like he does."

After he's got these seven hombres buried, Hogan puts up in his graveyard a plank bearin' the names of five more hombres he's killed 'fore he come to Burro Gap. To top it off, he sets up a big rock slab by itself and paints on it in black letters the name of Pecos Allen.

But under that last gent's name he writes a sort of little postscript, sayin', "Got him to git!"

Pecos Allen ain't no citizen of Burro Gap, and it don't 'pear like he is much of a rip-snortin' gent far as a reputation goes. Somebody says they punched cows with 'im over on the Pecos six years afore this and that then he was a plumb quiet sort of beanpole lad till some cussedness drove 'im on the prod. But that he heard Pecos finally ended up in the pen.

Well, to come back to the poker game I done located for yuh in the Blood Keg, Hell Hogan shuffles over and takes a seat on my right. Hogan ain't no saint in poker playin', any more'n he is at anything else. Them slim hands of his'n work so smooth it's hard to ketch 'im at cheatin'. Besides, what good would ketchin' him do anyhow, with him overdue for plantin' another corpse in his exclusive judgment day waitin' room?

So us punchers plays sorter down 'hind a log, much as we can not to make Hogan mad. The game is goin' along jest like that, none too enthusiastic, when in walks one of Saint Peter's riders. I mean a preacher gent, yuh know.

He is dressed in black, even to the little hard derby hat he's got on. He's tall, though a little stooped over, and he wears a curly, light-complexioned beard a few inches long. He pulls off a pair of colored glasses, to show us steel gray eyes set back in his head, and powerful meanful. He ain't got the tan of the range, though his long legs do look like they've been used for forkin' cayuses a lot.

"Gentlemen," he begins with a deep, businesslike voice which the whole house can hear, "my name is Baker. I've jest arrived in town today. And I'm glad to spread my gospel right away. This is my message: Be shore yore sins will find yuh out. Ef any of yuh feel like you want to commune with me, why come to my house. I've rented the little white 'dobe casa jest this side of Sloan's assay office on Maricopa Street. I do hope yuh'll come."

The sky trail blazer turns on his heels and starts out, plumb strange compared to the other sech fellers I've seen come buckin' the beer bottles with a Bible.

But Hell Hogan don't let 'im get out the door till he raises up with more ceremony than the preacher hisself has showed. It 'pears like the preacher has give him a idea to get in some more of the Hogan brand of missionary work, which same is to kill men 'fore they do any more meanness, and do it with the grandest way brains can think up.

"Hey there, Reverend," Hogan spits out sorter nasty, "yore comin' to town has give me a wonderful inspiration. I knowed all along they was somethin' lackin' to my graveyard program. Now I see it. What I've neglected is the funerals. Every dead hombre needs a funeral. I'm goin' to bury me another man tomorrer, and he'll have a funeral sech as this old village never has seen. Everybody is invited, tomorrer at three o'clock, at Hell Hogan's graveyard!"

Hell Hogan swept his hand about the room in a grand circle. From bein' hard, his face changed to a happy grin. He really was some pleased all right, for look what a improvement this would be over his last killin'.

The preacher only looks down the way at 'im for a short spell,

like he understood that the devil had done got Hell Hogan's tough hide branded all over with his pitchfork brand. Then the Bible-toter turns slow and moves out through the front door.

"Deal the last up card," says Hogan, floppin' back down on his stool.

Now I'll give yuh three guesses on what's upperfirst in our minds. It ain't cards nor that preacher nor whiskey. Yuh could jest feel the question flyin' through the smoke-hazed air. Excludin' Hogan hissef, who was goin' to be the chief transactor at that funeral tomorrer? That was it. For nobody doubted a minute that we wasn't going to have a funeral. Hell Hogan loved to carry things out jest as he declares it is to be.

"Who's Hogan mad at now?" one of the boys says to me after Hogan has broke both of us and we're breathin' easy on the outside once more.

"I don't know," I states back positive. "All I know is, I'm goin' to try awful hard to keep 'im from gettin' mad at me. But," as I suddenly remembers what the town mayor has hired three days ago, "how 'bout the new town marshal? Don't yuh reckon Hogan hates to look at his figure behind that badge?"

"I hope not," regrets my present companion, "for the new marshal has a wife and two kids."

That night we had a nifty travelin' show in town. We sorter looked for Hogan to pick the showhouse for this grandest of killin's, but he don't.

The next mornin' Burro Gap ain't no more informed than she was the night afore, on who was goin' to be buried that day. Ef they had been any doubtin' Toms as to whether or not we'd have said funeral, they sure got their minds set right when Hell Hogan showed up around ten o'clock.

Nope, he didn't kill a man right off. But what does he do? Marches straight down to Henry Biltman's place. Henry keeps a hardware and furniture store, in the back room of which same he has a undertakin' shop. A few of us rustles up nerve enough amongst us to foller Hogan there.

"Say, Biltman," he begins, and he don't stutter none neither, "have yore funeral wagon ready today at twenty minutes to

three. This thing is goin' to be done in style. I've done sent word to that preacher person to be ready when I calls on 'im, and I've got a dozen Mexicans diggin' the grave over in my personal lot."

"How soon," asks Henry, grinnin' sickish to please Hogan, "will yore corpse be ready for me to prepare for burial?"

"They won't be no preparin' of the carcass," Hogan informs Henry, "only what I do when I shoot it off its feet. All you have to do is to put in yore wagon the coffin I pick out, hitch up yore spickest span of broncs and then stop all the buggies yuh ketch on the street, to add them to said funeral procession. Spread the news around, boys," orders Hogan, turnin' on us, "that I don't want to ketch nobody leavin' town today till after this funeral. Also, that I'm liable to call the town roll at the graveyard, and I don't want to have nobody so neglectful as not to come to this superfine funeral. Everybody might as well line up down here right where Henry's wagon starts out."

Talk about a man holdin' his breath. The whole town was holdin' its breath now. For, unless it was the town marshal, or this Pecos Allen, showed up some place, it was jest as liable to be one man as the other when Hogan got ready to order him into battle as a introducin' to his death.

Hell Hogan goes stompin' up and down the street and castin' them snaky eyes of his'n this way and that, like he was tryin' to pick out his man. I know we coulda mobbed the show-off killer ef anybody had jest got up nerve enough to start things. The vigilantes hadn't been in existence here yet, and so, with Hogan huntin' for his corpse, who was goin' to take a chance on startin' operations against 'im? Not me.

And what's our new town marshal doin' now? Not a thing. He cain't even be found. That is, till Hell Hogan spreads the word around that the marshal better be in his office in front of the jail by eleven o'clock or he'll start huntin' for 'im.

"What goes off today has to have both religion and law to it," Hogan tells us.

Word of this got to the marshal and he come almost a-trottin' to his place of business, three minutes till eleven.

It ain't long after this till we see Hogan go stompedin' hissef into the little hotel which stands catty-cornered acrost the street from the Blood Keg. We hear his gun beller out a few times as he goes up the stairs.

"He's gone after his corpse now," somebody opines.

"Say," I decides out loud to them about me, "I'll bet some place sometime Hell Hogan has had trouble with some of them show actors, for they're stayin' up there. That's where the corpse is comin' from."

I could hear folks around me sigh at that hope. A little crowd gathers in the street outside and we strain our ears for the worst to happen inside. Then out the winders comes rollin' them hotel guests, men and women alike. And them actors is leadin' the getaway too, gents. Inside, we can hear some women screamin', but they's no more shootin'.

Things simmer down so that we begin a hope some fool feller has taken a crack at Hogan and been lucky enough to drill 'im dead center. But our hopes don't last no time, for out comes Hogan lookin' more like a old clothes peddler than he does a badman. He's loaded down with the actor's full dress suits, shiny shoes and high silk sombreros.

In front of us he stops, lookin' out over his armful of duds. I see he is sizin' us up, and then afore anybody can do anything, he calls out my name and Tommy Hayden's, 'cause he thinks we'll fit his duds.

"Take a suit apiece, boys," he says, sortin' out and throwin' clothes at us "go put 'em on and be down where the hearse starts, twenty minutes of three o'clock. This is goin' to be the stylishest thing this country ever pitched. I'm goin' to wear one of these suits and Henry will wear another, us settin' up on the boot and you two ridin' alongside the hearse."

Me and Tommy Hayden takes our duds and ambles off, too proud. But nobody laughs at us. They don't even snicker. For yuh see, the whole town is still in the dark as to who is to be the corpse for this funeral, and nobody is anxious to help Hogan make up his mind on the matter.

Hogan spies them actors and actresses huddled off back of the

hotel, so he swaggers up and tells 'em how he liked their singin' at the show and says he wants some more of it—at the funeral. Three or four chatters out at the same time that they'll be there for the singin', and asks what sort of songs he wants.

"The preacher is to be there," Hogan tells 'em, "so I reckon it oughta be—yeah, we will have one good preachin' song. Then I want yuh to give us variety by singin' *The Cowboy's Lament* and some grand opery music. And that reminds me, we oughta have flowers and pallbearers."

So Hogan orders several fellers to see to it that they is plenty of flowers for the occasion, and then he picks out six husky lads for pallbearers. Them boys look plumb tickled over it too, for anybody would lots ruther be made into a pallbearer at a funeral than be picked out for the corpse.

That's what keeps mystifyin' Burro Gap all durin' them long, long hours till its time to make a early start for Henry Biltman's undertakin' parlor. That name tickles me now, for pore Henry is shore undertakin' this time. Undertakin' somethin' he don't know what. For Henry is hopin' hard as anybody for Pecos Allen or some outsider to show up as the target.

That's what all of us is doin'. Me now, there I was all dressed up in them locoed rags of some show geezer and lookin' lots sillier than a fish in a bathin' suit. My hat is way too big, so I stuffs the top with rags to keep it up above my eyes, anyway enough to be able to watch every move of this Hell Hogan, even ef he won't let none of us bring guns to the funeral.

Tommy Hayden also got the idea of stuffin' his high hat with somethin'. But among its stuffin's Tommy hides a six-gun. That is exposed sorter premytoor, yuh might say, when down by the undertakin' wagon Tommy lays his leg acrost a hoss which ain't been thoroughly uncocked for the day, and the hoss pitches a bit and Tommy's high silk sombrero rolls off in the dust.

Shivers creeps up my back and pore Tommy turns pale as all eyes bulge down at the hogleg which falls outa that hat. For Hell Hogan is lookin' too! He jest looks at the gun, then up at Tommy, as if to say, "Well, I knowed providence would provide me with a victim, with a good excuse to kill 'im too."

Tommy opens his mouth, but his voice has done left 'im. Hogan walks over, picks up the gun, looks at it, and onct more back at Tommy. Then he laughs. Although his yeller teeth shows like punkin seeds and his snaky eyes is terrible to look at now, I know that Hogan's laughin' face shore looked beautiful to Tommy right then.

"I won't even look to see ef they's any more guns hid out on me," Hogan vows, "for they's no man got the guts to use one ef he does have it. Ef a gun is pulled on me, its owner loses out on the funeral altogether, for I'll kill 'im and leave 'im lay in the street."

So, expressin' his mind, Hogan dashes up the street yellin' for everybody to hurry on down, for the funeral procession is soon goin' to be movin'. And say, folks, lots of Burro Gap citizens got to movin' down to fall in line, let me tell yuh. In five minutes we don't have less'n two or three hundred people strung out 'hind that hearse.

Then here we go up the street, hearse first, with Hell Hogan and Henry Biltman on the boot, dressed up like lousy lords, only Hogan has got his two hoglegs strapped on handy and a extra pair of guns rammed into his breeches belt. I'm ridin' on the left side of the hearse and Tommy Hayden on the right, but we ain't got no shootin' hardware. 'Hind us comes a old stage coach which Hogan made somebody rig up for to carry his actor singers. Then comes mebbe ten buggies. After that is them as is on hosses, which mebbe is fifty, and last comes the hoofers in our dust, mostly Mexicans.

But still no corpse! No Pecos Allen. No nobody but us.

That was what was tellin' on our nerves. What's more, we don't even know who is goin' to be made into the corpse. It looks like we're to get some idea when the hearse turns off toward the town jail and the marshal's office. Hogan takes out his extra guns and empties 'em in the air, just for color.

In front of the place. Hell Hogan climbs down, walks over businesslike and pounds on the door with the butt of his six-gun. The door don't open, so he whams a bullet through it. Open she does, and around the side comes our marshal's head.

"Come in, Hogan," he invites, grinnin' sweetish.

"In hell!" Hogan snaps back. "You come out!"

Talkin' of a cat teasin' a mouse. Yuh oughta seen Hell Hogan step aside there chucklin' to hissef while the pore marshal steps out on legs which can hardly do business a-tall.

"March for that hearse!" Hogan orders.

Our marshal takes one last fearsome look at Hogan, then turns his back. I got a good look at the marshal's face then, and it's white as a uncooked biscuit. He cain't help from glancin' back over his shoulder, expectin' to have a bullet drill through 'im.

"To the back end," comes the tickled Hogan's orders, "and crawl up in!"

"Great Gawdamighty," I groans to myself, "he's goin' to kill 'im right there inside the funeral wagon! And here us galoots are lettin' the devil get away with it."

It was too late to do nothin' now, though, for Hogan ain't let none of us keep our guns. The marshal is so weak when he sees that coffin inside that he cain't climb into the hearse.

"You hombres there, help 'im," orders Hogan, pointin' to me and Tommy.

So we rides up, gives the marshal a lift and then pulls our broncs aside. I turns my head, not wantin' to see the pore feller's brains splash.

"All right," I hear Hogan's voice instead of a gun, "now on to the preacher's house. Both law and religion has got to be at this funeral."

Great knock-kneed jackrabbits! Here we go again, and no more corpse in sight than ever. I'm not the only one that starts to sweat under the collar. What ef the onery devil has had one of us in mind at this time? That's what is worryin' me and every other soul in this graveyard parade. Then I happens to think it wouldn't be like Hell Hogan to shoot a unarmed man down.

I ain't much more started to console mysef on this point, though, till I remembers them two extra guns he's got. Now what're they for? They ain't no answer, 'cept the sweat that is rollin' down my forehead, which same salty water I also sees on Tommy's face and old Henry's too.

Up to the preacher's house we parade. Hogan crawls down again and starts for the door. Then he stops. On the door is a big pasteboard, with these words on it: *Will meet you at your own graveyard.* I expect Hogan to get mad, he don't. He only turns back and says, "All right, jest so he's there. The funeral would be a fizzle without that preacher. Drive straight on to my boneyard, Biltman."

At them orders, they's a good many more in the parade turnin' biscuit color now. For it's certain that Hogan has got his man in the crowd some place. It shore is a funerally line that we strings out over the hill. There ahead of us is Hell Hogan's private buryin' ground, and standin' over at the far side of the grave which Hogan has had the Mexicans dig is the preacher.

Then my eyes falls on the big rock with the name of Pecos Allen on it. How my ole heart does take a jump at that. There is the intended corpse! Hell Hogan wouldn't make all this ceremony jest over a common hombre like me or the others in the parade.

But where was Pecos Allen? Reckon he would be fool enough to show up here now, against the slickest killer that ever had throwed a six-gun on our range? But him showin' up now is out of the question, for they's nobody with the Reverend Mr. Baker and no chanct of anybody showin' up.

Now I see why Preacher Baker has come ahead of the parade. He's standin' over there on the other side of the grave, with a six-gun strapped on the outside of his long coat. Mebbe, I thinks, some preachers might depend on the skies for protection, but this one knows where the power lays in this powder-spewin' country. And what's more, the preacher has his gun slung sorter low 'round in front, like he knowed jest where he wanted to grab.

Hell Hogan looked 'im over, then got down and walked around to the back of the hearse. The marshal jumps out and starts to run, but Hogan leaps in front of 'im and lets 'im smell the bung hole of a six-shooter.

"Watch the boys carry this coffin over there 'side the grave," Hogan orders. "Dear Reverend sir," goes on Hogan to the

preacher, "you might as well stand clost by the coffin, I guess."

"It would be more convenient ef you done that," the preacher says back.

It's funny to me that Hell Hogan don't get mad at that, but he only looks acrost at the sky man and snorts.

After the pallbearers has wobbled over with the coffin and everybody is standin' around waitin' for somethin' to break loose, Hell Hogan looks acrost at the preacher and asks, "How did you ever get here?"

"Rode," replies the minister, noddin' towards a leggy sorrel which is hitched to a yucca acrost the way.

"And do yuh mind," Hogan goes on, boilin' over with confidence, "ef I ask yuh to tell these people why yuh've come here? I want to keep my skirts clear of the law, yuh see."

"Yeah, folks," the preacher says, "I have come here on behalf of a feller which used to be known by the name of Pecos Allen. Now, up at the penitentiary, he is jest Number Ten Thousand Eighty-seven. This dirty polecat yuh call Hell Hogan tricked 'im to the pen by being smart enough to saddle some of his low-down work off onto Pecos Allen. But ten weeks ago Pecos Allen escaped from the pen, and me and him stayed together in the mountains until he could get up enough disguise to travel here safe, after a friend of his'n had brought word where Hogan was.

"Oh, yeah," the preacher goes on, "Pecos Allen means to be at this funeral party 'fore it's over with. I didn't know when I went in the saloon last night that Hogan would make such a big funeral party for hissef, but I did know that he'd make a big splurge of some sort, like it's in his nature to do. He is dead sure he can drill Pecos Allen. But Pecos Allen has been practicin' hours every day since he escaped, perfectin' the natural gift for throwin' a gun that he didn't know he had till recently. He wants this made plain, so's he won't have no unfair advantage of surprise ability."

"Shut up that blab," Hogan bellers out louder'n usual, "and get on outa here 'fore I fill yore carcass full of holes. I've got faster and faster with a six-gun, till now I'm plain Colt lightnin'. Arch," he goes on, turnin' on me, "take this empty six-gun and

tap four times on the top of that coffin. Let's see ef Mr. Pecos Allen wants to trot out from his hidin' place and fight me at the fourth tap."

Hell Hogan is still braggin', but I can see he is worried, like he thought he'd overbluffed his hand. Before I start tappin', the preacher tells me to wait, that he's not through and hence ain't ready to let Pecos Allen come on the scene. We all snatch glances this way and that, wonderin' where the heck Pecos Allen can be hidin'. Then somebody whispers that he's in the coffin!

How stupid, I scolds myself, for not thinkin' of that 'fore this.

But I ain't got much time for sech thoughts, for the preacher cuts loose with the bitin'est tongue I ever heard. First, he says, he don't want the people of this country to get the wrong impression of Pecos Allen, jest 'cause he was a escaped convict. Then he accuses Hogan of more meanness than I ever dreamed one man could do.

"He has put Pecos Allen too deep in the clutches of the law," the preacher goes on, "for the man ever to get free by courts. So, after we've finished the funeral of Hell Hogan here, why let no man, not even you, Mr. Town Marshal, try to stop Pecos from ridin' away on that sorrel which I've left yonder for 'im."

I've been watchin' Hell Hogan clost, and it's plain now that he's distressed. That preacher has talked Hogan's braggin' heart into its real rights. Hogan has lost his nerve. He ain't even able to look straight into the blazin' eyes of Preacher Baker.

I see 'im shift on his feet, nervous, several times. In spite of how fast he is with a gun, he's scared.

It's gettin' on all our nerves too. First no corpse all day, then no Pecos Allen to stop a corpse from bein' manufactured in front of Hogan's gun. While I'm glancin' here and there swift, I see our town marshal come easin' forward, like he sees somethin' or has lost his fear. He looks plumb fascinated with what's in his mind. "Can he be Pecos Allen, after all?" I asks myself. "Or is Pecos in that coffin? Or what the heck?"

"All right, pard," the preacher is sayin' with a friendly nod at me, "when you're ready, why start tappin'."

"And clear away, people," Hell Hogan shouts, "for the

fireworks shore is goin' to start on that fourth tap. And remember how tricky this thing has been worked up, so when I kill Pecos Allen in defendin' my life, why the law will be satisfied. Go to tappin', Arch. Slow, steady."

Thud!

That's the way that coffin lid cast up its voice at me the first tap. It sounds holler, I decides, as my gun is raised back upwards. And with the first lick, Hogan steps closter to the preacher.

Bang!

That's the way my second lick goes in my ears, for it shore was turnin' awful deathly still on every side. And Hell Hogan takes another step toward the preacher, bringin' up his hind foot like a soldier comin' to a halt. And he's got his eyes fastened on the preacher, jest for the world like a snake oozin' up on a bird. He's right on the brink of the grave now, though he don't 'pear to see it. And there stands the preacher, legs slightly apart, bent a little forward and lookin' Hell Hogan square in the eyes, jest like the bird, only the preacher ain't quiverin' nor hollerin'. He ain't doin' nothin'. He's jest standin' there.

Boom!

There goes the third lick. Hell Hogan shoots out his foot for another closter step, but of course he is steppin' into the grave and starts to fall.

Tricky! That's what Hell Hogan shore was. Ef he's lost his nerve, he ain't his head. The minute he starts down, he changes from a fall to a leap. And he's leapin' into a corner of the shallow grave, with his right hand whippin' up a six-gun which he is pokin' lightnin' fast across the grave top. Of course the trick give the polecat the start, and Hogan ain't aimin' to expose more'n his head.

But say, gents! Look at that preacher now. No, it's no use to look. He's too fast to see. He jest seems to grab a gun outa the air, he gets it into his hand so quick. It's spewin' powder and lead, too.

The smoke from the two guns seemed to meet, but the

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Wolf

by PALMER HOYT

Old Shep had been a great dog, but his time was nearly at hand when the storm blew this black pup in. Tom Higgins called him "Pooch" – but what would he turn out to be?

AN ICY WIND, LADEN WITH fine sharp sleet, hurled itself at the little cabin. The gale howled in fury as it rose to the peak of its effort and moaned as it ebbed to seek new strength with which to hurl itself at the small log structure.

Inside the cabin a man's voice rose above the rattle of ice on the window panes: "It's a turrible night, Shep. One o' th' worst I've seen in th' twenty years I be'n in these Blue Mountains."

Shep, a great shaggy shepherd, was asleep before the crackling fire. He heard and raised one ear as though in agreement. The dog blinked his eyes solemnly and then straightway dropped back to his dreams of bitter battles and hard-won prey.

Shep was old. His breath came and went in labored wheezings. His limbs twitched either from the aches of old age or because of the pictures that rolled before his dog mind as he slept.

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"You've be'n a great dog, Shep," the man's voice was gentle, "but you're almost done, old boy. I doubt you'll live out th' winter."

A new sound mingled with the howl and moan of the wind. It was softer than the noise of the gale at its peak and more piteous than the moan of the wind as it ebbed.

The man listened. The whine came again and yet again. The man jerked the door open.

The storm poured in with fierce, cold force. Shep sat up on the hearth and shivered. On the wind came a black pup, five or six months old. Shep got to his feet and growled surly disapproval of this whining, wriggling visitor.

The pup dropped to the floor wagging his tail in a fury of appreciation of this new-found warmth; he wiggled and panted in his most ingratiating fashion as though to show his intentions were of the best.

Shep nosed the pup for an instant and then the old dog flopped back on his bearskin in front of the leaping flames.

The man had watched closely. "Black pup," he decided. "Shep either likes yuh or he's gettin' awful weak; pore ol' cuss. Come here, pooch."

The young dog crawled on his belly toward the man, with tail beating a furious tattoo of hope on the rough floor.

"I don't just make yuh out," the man ran his big hands over the pup's loose, large frame. "Got some shepherd in yuh, a touch of husky mebbe, and a bit of bulldog for those jaws. Jus' dog, I reckon. You'll be a big feller when yuh got your growth. What'll I call yuh? Let's see, no high-soundin' name fer a mongrel like you. Somethin' simple. Let's see, pooch. Yeah, that's it! Pooch, Pooch, yuh are. Hey, *Pooch!*"

As though in recognition of his naming, the pup scrambled in awkward haste to his feet and flung himself upon the big man's knees.

"You've got lots t' learn, Pooch," said the pup's new master, as he shoved the dog back. "Yuh might be a dog someday. How'd yuh get lost in th' blizzard? Reckon yuh dropped off some rig out on th' Old Oregon trail and couldn't figger no place t' go so yuh came here. Well, yuh could of did worse. Tom Higgins ain't a bad master, is he, Shep?"

The old dog cocked an ear at the familiar voice, but did not get up. Even knowledge that this man's beloved hands fondled this black pup that had come so unexpectedly out of the storm failed to bring Shep up in protest. His strength was waning. His wheezings grew louder. The dog was sick and old and feeble.

A little later the man brought food and the black pup swallowed a great plate of scraps in ravenous gulps. Then he whirled for a moment near the hearth as dogs will, found a proper place to sleep and curled up before the crackling fire.

In a few minutes Tom Higgins undressed, blew out the kerosene lamp and climbed into bed. Soon his heavy breathing mingled with the rattle of the sleet, the howl of the gale, the crackle of the fire, the wheezing of Shep and the occasional whines of the black pup.

Toward morning Shep choked and twitched spasmodically. His wheezing ceased of a sudden and the old dog lay very still. The

black pup awoke and nosed the silent Shep: the pup's whine rose to a howl. Tom Higgins got up and lit the lamp.

The man looked at Shep and touched the rough head. Tears coursed his cheeks as he spread a blanket over the old dog; they were tried friends these two.

With leaden hands the man replenished the fire and again extinguished the light. Soon his regular breathing told that sleep had come. The other sounds were there. The rattle of the sleet, the howl of the gale, the crackle of the fire and the whines of the pup as he dreamed dog dreams. Only the wheezes of Shep were absent; the great dog was still under the blanket.

Spring soon laid a gentle, kindly hand on the Blue Mountains, filling the air with the scent of growing things and spreading a carpet of green along the forest trails.

With spring came lessons for Pooch. Pooch was not an apt pupil. The black dog refused to take life seriously. He was a play boy.

Tom Higgins did not demand much of a dog, so he was patient with Pooch. Higgins required obedience and Pooch learned, as spring wore into summer, and summer into fall, to stay at home when told, to fetch the master's hat, hold the reins of a saddle horse firmly in his great teeth and to do other things that Higgins thought proper for a dog.

If Higgins had any misgivings about Pooch, he told no one. When asked he insisted that Pooch would be a great dog one day. One big fear, however, welled in Higgins' heart. The man was afraid—afraid that Pooch was lacking in courage.

Then one day came conviction. Higgins went early that fall morning to Meacham to buy a few needed supplies and Pooch went along rejoicing in the crisp October air and glad that he was alive. Pooch was now well over a year old, he was a big dog, powerful and fast.

Hot trails Pooch found as he ambled along beside the road; trails still fresh with the scent of rabbits and squirrels. Once he flushed a bevy of Chinese pheasants, glorious in their fall plumage, and was after them like a mad hatter.

"Pooch! *Pooch!*" Higgins bellowed from the rattling buckboard and the black dog returned with what dignity he could muster.

Pooch went into Matt Murphy's general store with Higgins, for in the Blue Mountains where men go their dogs follow.

"Howdy, Tom," Matt greeted, his whiskered face parting in a smile of greeting to disclose broken, tobacco-stained tusks. "That yore new houn'? Tough luck, ol' Shep dyin'. There was a dog! What kind of breed is this here houn'?"

"I don't rightly know. He's just dog, I reckon."

"Dad burn, I'll never fergit th' time Ben Bunz turned them two snarlin', snappin' mongrels o' his'n onto ol' Shep," the storekeeper cackled as he recalled the incident. "Shep was an ol' dog then but what he did t' them shaller-pated coyotes wasn't nobody's business."

"No, it warn't," Tom Higgins agreed with a grin of reminiscence. "But, yuh know, Ben's allus had it in fer me since then. Not that it makes no difference t' me."

"Speak o' th' devil," Matt exclaimed, looking out the door, "an' yuh'll shore'n hell see his shadder. There comes Ben Bunz now, him an' them two imps of Satan snarlin' at his heels."

A silence fell between the two men as Ben Bunz, a great gaunt man with an evil, leering face, approached. At his heels two big, nondescript dogs trotted.

Bun entered the store and so did the dogs.

The newcomer replied with surly gruffness to the greetings of the two men. The black dog cowered behind Higgins' booted legs. "Where'd yuh get that blamed cur?" Bunz demanded.

Tom Higgins did not have a chance to reply. At that moment the two Bunz dogs discovered Pooch. Bristling and growling they approached, while the pup whimpered and dropped to the floor in token of his peaceful intentions.

Pooch was bigger boned than either of Bunz' dogs and the sight of the pup cowering before the allies of the man he hated angered Tom Higgins beyong words.

"Get up and fight!" he ordered giving Pooch a kick.

The black dog got up, but as his enemies rushed him with

every evident intention of tearing him apart he side-stepped them and made for the door. Pooch was rattled, frightened. His world had suddenly turned upside down. His man-god had kicked him; his own kind had turned against him, so Pooch, still the pup, had fled.

Ben Bunz laughed. He said: "Th' dawg's yeller, jes' like his master!"

That was too much for Tom Higgins. He made no reply. Instead he stepped forward with swift assurance and slapped Bunz across the face.

With an angry roar Bunz lashed out with one of his hamlike hands. Higgins parried the blow with an upflung arm and countered with a stiff right to the other's jaw.

Bunz came back to land a crushing blow to the stomach that sent Higgins reeling away and following it with a stiff punch to the ear.

Tom staggered, but as Bunz lashed out with one of his corked boots he dodged the fierce kick and crashed a haymaker to his opponent's jaw.

Bunz fell. He was out. Matt Murphy brought water and sloshed it on the fallen man who groaned as he returned to consciousness.

Bunz' dogs growled as they slinked into the corner. "Come on, yuh yeller hounds!" Tom bellowed, but the dogs did not stir. "Mebbe my dog can't lick yuh but I can."

Ben Bunz rose to his feet and felt his sore jaw with tender fingers. He threatened as he walked slowly from the store: "I'll get yuh fer this, Tom Higgins!"

"Any time!"

"Yuh made yoreself a enemy," Matt warned as he got together Tom's purchases. "Ben Bunz is not the man t' take that and smile."

"He never did like me and I allus hated him," Higgins decided, biting a chew with judicious care from the big plug he carried in his hip pocket. He rolled the quid of tobacco into its accustomed place in his mouth. "His threats don't scare me none."

Matt changed the subject. He did not want to involve himself

in what might develop into a feud. He asked: "Now, let's see, Tom, yuh got everything? There's sugar, baconback, Star tobaccy and flour. Anything else?"

"Reckon that'll be all. So long, Matt!"

"So long, Tom!"

When Tom Higgins got home the black dog was waiting for him.

"Pooch, I'm ashamed of yuh! Y're yeller!"

That was Higgins' only comment on the all but unforgivable sin for a dog of his, but after that when Higgins went to Meacham he left the black pup at home; this made Pooch sad.

Snow came and with it cold days, as fall blended into winter. The snow was heavy that year and as winter died a blizzard swept in from the north to hurl an impotent threat of eternal cold at the Oregon mountain country.

The blizzard came in suddenly just at dusk and the unexpected swirl of the icy blast reminded Higgins that he had forgotten to close the door to the log calf shed some two hundred yards below the house.

With Pooch at his heels Higgins went out into the cold, for wolves and cougars had ranged low that year and he had already lost a calf or two.

As Higgins closed the heavy, low door and started back toward the house, Pooch whined and growled. A strange, fearsome scent was in his nostrils.

Head down, bucking the wind, Higgins did not notice Pooch as he darted off to the right toward the barn. He heard Pooch whine and looked up to see the young dog flatten himself in the snow with an ingratiating wriggle, whining as he flopped down in awkward haste.

As Higgins watched, a dark, lithe from shot straight at the dog and with no preliminary movements flung himself on the prostrate Pooch. Tom Higgins realized, as he hurried to the scene, that the dog was struggling in the grip of a gray timber wolf from the higher mountains brought down by the need for food.

As Higgins came up he saw that the gaunt wolf had Pooch by the throat.

The rancher looked about for a club, but could find none. Everything was hidden by the heavy blanket of snow.

Higgins did not further delay. Perhaps he felt for a fleeting instant that this dog of his was not worth saving, but he could not see him die before his very eyes. It was too far to go to the barn and back. It would be too late then, Higgins knew, for the wolf had a death grip on the young black dog.

So, without thought of consequences, Higgins rushed in to save his dog as his kind had done since dogs first came to serve man, warm at his fire and guard his flocks.

In his hunger lust and blood madness the wolf paid no attention to Higgins as he rushed in. The rancher wasted no time. He flung himself on the timber wolf and grabbed his jaws in his great gloved hands.

The wolf's jaws were of steel, but the man's strong hands were of steel, too, and as the seconds ticked away and Pooch's life hung in the balance the jaws began to part under the terrific pressure exerted on them.

Those jaws of death gave a fraction of an inch, then more and more. As Pooch's limp form dropped from the wolf's fangs, the gray invader leaped free and turned on the man.

Higgins met his rush. His left arm went up to keep the flashing teeth from his throat and his right fist crashed a fierce blow against the animal's ribs. The wolf was knocked into the snow, but turned in the same split second to renew his attack.

Again the wolf sprang, the snarl of death was in his throat. Again Higgins met him with fist and arm, but this time the wolf's teeth sheared through sheepskin coat, wool shirt and underwear to bring blood.

Meantime Pooch had returned to consciousness. He sat on his haunches and whined. This was the primitive. He whined again, his whine had a strange new tone. Around him, in ever widening circles the endless ranks of his ancestors sat and howled their paean of conquest into the teeth of the storm. The young dog smelled blood, his blood and his master's. His whine changed to a

growl. The coarse hair on the back of his neck rose in a stiff, quivering ruff.

The inherited consciousness of ten thousand times ten thousand battles his kind had waged for man welled dimly into his dog mind. The ghosts of his million ancestors muzzled at him, claimed him for a leading role in this drama of death. The growl in his throat rivaled that of the wolf in fierceness. Pooch suddenly realized that life was a serious business; he realized that life was not all chasing rabbits; that to live a dog must face and conquer death. Pooch suddenly shed the mantle of puppyhood and became a dog. He became a dog whose man-god was being periled by a wild thing that was of his kind but not of his kind.

The wolf had sprung again. Twice he had been repulsed. This time the man slipped and sagged in the snow. The man threw his arms up in a protecting barrier about his face and neck. The wolf's teeth tore at the protecting cloth, the fangs found flesh.

And then a black shadow, the shadow of death itself, flashed through the snow-filled dusk. It was Pooch rallying to his man-god. The black dog flung himself at the maddened wolf. The dog's strong jaws closed on the wolf's throat. A drop of sour-mug blood, a distant trace of bulldog kept his jaws clamped in this viselike grip that was death.

The black dog jerked backwards and pulled the wolf from his master's body. Pooch pulled the wolf forward and backward through the snow. The joyous, carefree play boy was gone and in his stead had come a steel-jawed killer. Pooch shook the wolf in a wild fury; his prey went limp, but he shook on.

Higgins got up.

"Well, I'll be . . . " He could say no more. His surprise was too great as he watched the black dog shaking the life from the gaunt, gray wolf.

Again Higgins looked about for a club. This time he found one. He fell over something. It was a neck yoke with heavy steel tips and rings on each end of the hardwood shaft.

The rancher picked up the neck yoke and stood by, but still the black dog shook the apparently lifeless form of the wolf.

"That's all right, Pooch," Higgins said, "he's dead."

It took some time to make the dog understand, but finally he released his hold. The wolf lay still in the snow.

"Just to be sure," Higgins said as he swung the neck yoke in a skull-crushing blow against the wolf's head.

Late that night Higgins sat before the roaring fire fondling the black dog's great head and reiterating his surprise. "I'll be damned, Pooch!" he said over and over. "And t' think I thought yuh yeller!"

During the night the storm ceased. The morning dawned clear and cold; it was still winter. Early in the afternoon a south wind came. It was a chinook and the snow melted as though unseen fires burned below it.

For two days the thaw continued, the chinook blowing its gentle breath over the vanishing whiteness. It was spring. On Saturday morning when he got up, Tom Higgins noticed that he was out of salt.

"Got t' go t' Meacham, Pooch," he informed the black dog. "Yes, ol' boy, yuh can go, too."

In town Higgins bought his salt, some more Star tobacco and a few other needed items. Then he sat down on a rickety bench in front of the store to enjoy the warm March sun.

Pooch curled up at his master's feet and slept in the delicious warmth. The smell of spring was in the dog's nostrils as he dreamed and his legs moved in rhythm as he visioned the trails he would follow with the snow gone.

Then a wagon creaked in from a side road near the store. It was Ben Bunz, and his two ill-natured dogs trotted near the horses.

Bunz stopped his team at the hitching-rack in front of the blacksmith shop near by and got out of the wagon. He paid no apparent attention to Tom Higgins and the black dog. His mouth twisted as though he uttered a low command and with sudden inspiration his two snarling mongrels came snapping in at Pooch.

Tom Higgins said nothing. He didn't have to. Pooch wasn't the happy-go-lucky puppy that this pair had routed a few months before. Doghood had descended upon him, he had killed his

wolf. The black dog got off the porch and awaited the rush of the two bullies. The hair rose on his neck. A growl, menacing and deep, welled from his throat.

Despite their fierce rush the two Bunz dogs didn't really expect trouble. The smaller of the pair got there first. Pooch's technique was simple with him. As the dog struck, Pooch seized him by the throat and tossed him over his back. Then Pooch met the other dog with bared fangs and warning growl.

They closed. The smaller dog recovered and joined the fight. It didn't last long. Pooch was a sudden fury of twisting black motion, of flesh rending fangs. The Bunz dogs didn't like that kind of fighting. For every bit they tore from Pooch's black skin a dozen bits were torn from their own hides. All three dogs were bleeding profusely. The fight found a quick ending. The small dog decided, of a sudden, that he'd had enough; he made a run and dive for the protection of the low wagon box. The bigger Bunz dog was left alone to battle this rending, tearing black demon; he wasn't up to it. With a frenzy born of fear, he shook himself free and leaped for the wagon box to join his mate.

Pooch did not deign to follow. He returned to the warmth of the sunny porch and proceeded to take stock of his wounds.

But if Bunz' dogs were through, Bunz was not. The owner of the whipped dogs had watched the fight with reddening face.

The laughs of the onlookers roused him to action.

He approached Tom Higgins who had remained on the porch. "Y're dog may not be yeller, but you are!"

"What?" Higgins' question was a growl; he got slowly to his feet.

"I said it! You heard it!"

With a curse Higgins started for his enemy who was fifty feet away. Pooch was a black shadow at his heels.

At twenty-five feet Pooch's master paused as Bunz pulled a long black six-shooter from out of his hip pocket. "I'm gonna drill yuh! Damn yuh, Higgins!"

Perhaps it was the gun, perhaps it was the growled threat of Bunz's words, but the black shadow at Higgins' heels became

suddenly an arrow; an arrow that flew straight at the man holding the leveled gun.

There was a white foam slaver at Pooch's jaws, put there by the exertion of his battle with the two dogs. The slaver was specked with blood and there was blood elsewhere over Pooch's body; he was a sight to inspire terror in a heart more courageous than Bunz'.

"Mad dog!" Bunz' scream was one of stark fear. He pulled the trigger of his gun, but in his excitement the bullet went wild. With Pooch almost on him he turned and fled, hurling his gun at the charging dog.

This was something new again for Pooch and the black dog only snapped at his heels. Bunz flung himself into the wagon and lashed his horses into a run. "Mad dog! Mad dog!" he screamed. *"Mad Dog!"*

Pooch ran after the swaying wagon for a hundred yards and then trotted back. Higgins had picked up Bunz' gun and had resumed his place on the low porch.

"God boy!" was Higgins' only comment, as Pooch resumed the inventory of his wounds there in the delightful warmth of the spring sun at his master's side.

"Some dog!" a stranger walked up. He had seen the whole drama. "Some dog! What kind is he?"

Tom Higgins grinned and scratched his head. He said: "Jus' dog, I reckon."

"What's his name?"

Again Higgins scratched his head. He took a fresh chew from the big plug out of his hip pocket and rolled the quid into its proper place in judicial slowness. "Pooch," he started to say and then the picture of the black dog saving his life in the snow came into his mind. He saw the black dog shaking the timber wolf; he visioned Bunz' dogs in their flight and Bunz himself lashing his horses.

Tom Higgins smiled to himself. "Pooch," he decided, was no name for a dog like that. He touched the rough black head as a name more suitable flashed into his mind. "His name," Higgins said with a slow smile, "his name is Wolf!"

Lonesome Stakes A Claim

By Robert J. Pearsall

Lonesome's tales of his strikes were so patently fabrications that most of his hearers were amused rather than outraged. But for all his devil-may-care demeanor, there were places where he drew the line. And he drew the line at the role that a girl had been picked to play in Bunton's and Magruger's get-rich-quick scheme.

It's North you may run, to the rime-ringed sun,
Or South to the blind Horn's hate,
Or East all the way, to Mississippi Bay,
Or West to the Golden Gate.
–Song of the Argonauts.

AS THE FIRST BURRO in the diggings was named Lightning, and the most uproarious camp, Heavenly Peace, so Lonesome was inevitably not lonesome. He stood out as one who loved his fellow men, particularly as listeners. As long as one was present—and a tree toad might do in absence of a human—he would be nothing but garrulously happy and entertainingly inaccurate. For his was a barrage of talk, incessant, advancing point after point, and demolishing, with sheer verbosity, and obstacles like protests or countertalk.

But he was well liked, for all that. He was a lean and handsome

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youth of twenty years, straight shooting in a double sense, hard as a hickory rail, and with two years in the gold country behind him. That meant something–two years of survival, with clear eyes and head, unquenched spirit and high, good nature. For this was a rough, tough world, California, 1851.

"And a great old country, gentlemen," he declaimed. "Get back there far enough, back of the Feather River, where I just come from, grass won't grow for the gold in the ground. Poisons it, by Jiminy! Gold in pockets, gold in rocks, creek bottoms full of it! High water ain't muddy – it's yellow with gold. That's truth! Ants build their hills with it, solid, yellow dust. You don't have to stake no claim – just pick up what you can carry and lug it out. And then a little farther—

"Di'monds! I ain't seen this, but I know it for a fact, 'cause an Injun told me. Saved his life – that's why. Di'monds big as birds' eggs. Scattered all over like pebbles -- whole valley of 'em. Glitterin' like to blind you. Di'monds in the crotches of trees, he said. When the young trees first brought through the ground, they just lifted 'em out. Next time I'm goin' back there."

His audience of newcomers clustered around him, filling one corner of the Shades Saloon. Mostly their mouths were agape. Some sneered, but surreptitiously. There was a certain vigor about him, a flash in his young, blue eyes, a suggestion of handiness in the way his gun swung at his holster, that discouraged open disbelief. Besides, it might all be true. It was such stories that had brought them, clerks, farmers, blacksmiths, city toughs, crooks, gamblers–what not--flocking to the new Eldorado. They wanted to believe him, and they nearly did.

But a sour-looking man at the edge of the group questioned quizzically: "Why ain't ye back there now, then?" Lonesome swept him with a look of disdain. "Why? Had to come out, that's why. Had ten thousand in dust that I had to come out and cache. Got here just day 'fore yesterday. And I've done planted it. Lots more planted in that same place, too, where nobody'd find it till Day o' Judgment. And I've picked it all up on the fly--never staked a claim yet. Never will, either. Like to travel--that's me!"

His voice carried to the bar, lined with men, most of them miners back from the gold fields, celebrating their good luck, or consoling themselves for bad. Several of them turned and looked at him, frowning disapprovingly. It sounded dangerous to them – Lonesome's tales of his cache of gold. Probably it was harmless, youthful bragging, bolstering up his fantastic tales. But, then, it might be true, and there lay the danger. No one could know that it was not true. There were few limits to the possible in that new, fantastic world.

"The durn fool!" grumbled an old, red-whiskered miner. "Lord help him if he can't tell where the stuff is hid, the day he's kidnaped for a-tellin' of that story. He'll die right gradual, he will – the durn fool!"

Having produced the maximim of sensation, Lonesome edged out of the group and strolled across the barroom to a monte game, where he stood looking on. With the cessation of his voice, two men, who had been talking quietly together at the end of the bar, turned and came toward him.

"Like to talk with ye a minute, Lonesome," said the foremost, touching his arm. Lonesome turned, and his habitual smile left his face. He knew them, Magruger and Bunton, quite as well as he wanted to know them. They had a room near his at the Heart and Hand Hotel, and had scraped an acquaintance there. Tentatively, they had suggested that he go "pardner" in some vaguely hinted plan they had in mind to "make a haul for a lifetime." Perhaps they were more deceived in the youthful and apparently reckless Lonesome than he was in them. From the first, they reminded Lonesome of a tiger and a fox, nor had he changed his opinion.

Both were middle-aged and roughly dressed like miners, but there were no callouses on their hands. Magruger was a big, clean-shaven man, with a blunt, square face, as forceful looking as a cannon ball; his head was of a startling baldness and completed the resemblance. His eyes had a peculiar fierce brightness about them, and his mouth was big and voluble. Bunton was a little stocky man, oily and red in the face; his nose

was hooked and pointed straight down at the end of his forward projecting jaw, with a thin, tight-lipped mouth between.

No, Lonesome did not like them; nevertheless, he accompanied them across the floor and, at their request, sat down at a secluded table.

"You been thinkin' about what we've been talkin' about?" queried Bunton.

"I ain't heard any talk – leastwise, nothin' substantial."

"Sure you ain't, not yet, because we don't know whether we can depend on you. But if we c'u'd make a haul, a big one, a haul for a lifetime, and was to take you in as pardner—"

Lonesome laughed rather boastfully. "A haul! I'm gettin' together a haul, plenty enough for me. Got most of it right now."

There was an instant's pause. A flash of questioning came into Bunton's eyes. Magruger's gaze, unobserved by Lonesome, grew gimletlike. They, like the others, doubted Lonesome's story, and yet – it might be true.

"O' course," said Bunton. "But we're talkin' about a real haul, hundreds of thousands. And – and something else."

His look grew meaner. The fumes of whisky drifted across the table at Lonesome. He realized that both men had been drinking enough to lessen their caution considerably. Also, there was a certain urgency about them, indicating the close approach to action in the direction of their mighty haul. Still Bunton hesitated, probing at Lonesome with cunning eyes, before he played what he intended to be his trump card of temptation.

"Gold ain't everything. There's – there's something else – scarcer than gold out here. Wimmen!" It was out. "We're goin' a long voyage -- with a real haul – an' company. Look here!"

He drew a small leather case from his shirt pocket and passed it over to Lonesome. In it was a daguerreotype, a picture of a girl's face. A very young, irregularly beautiful, indubitably honest face, looked out at Lonesome and the world, with the effect of frank and happy curiosity. It was a curl-crowned, dimpled, very charming face, such as – Lonesome stared at it a moment, his thoughts drifting back, becoming boyish again - back to the

opposite rim of the continent. Then his jaw tightened, and he put the picture back into Bunton's extended hand.

"She willin'?" he questioned.

Bunton grinned. "She's goin'."

Hardness came into Lonesome eyes and voice. "You ain't answered my question."

"And we ain't aimin' to tell you anything more till we find out where you stand. We need another pardner, but we got one a-waitin', if you don't take on with us. He's a bit tough for us, but he'll do, I guess, if you won't come in."

Vaguely Lonesome thought of pretending agreement in order to discover what he could. Even if the girl were not what she seemed – impossible thought! – she should be saved from Bunton and Magruger. But it was a vagrant impulse, weakened by the thought that Bunton was probably lying, and inhibited by the code of the gold fields, that each man's business was his own. An unreasoning rush of rage seized Lonesome, as he watched Bunton restore the picture to the pocket of his greasy shirt.

"You can find out where I stand, right now. I ain't dealin' with skunks nor with you."

He was on his feet, hand on the butt of his gun. Magruger and Bunton had made swift, instant movements toward theirs–movements instantly checked.

Lonesome stood for a moment looking at Magruger and Bunton, while men near by moved quietly and expertly out of range of the guns. But the hum of the wheels, the rattle of chips, and the monotonous voices of the gamblers, "Make your bets, gentlemen. The game is made," did not cease, nor would they have ceased at shots. At last, Lonesome turned from the sheepish looks of the two and strode with something of a swagger out of the saloon.

"That settles it," growled Magruger behind him. "Now we'll go ahead with 'Four- fingered Jack,' like I wanted to do all along."

"Yes, damn his hide!" declared Bunton and looked vengefully after Lonesome. "And *he'll* dance on air before mornin' and pay the piper for the tune, besides." Outside, Lonesome strolled

lightly down Kearney Street. The evening was just beginning, and there was no use letting Bunton and Magruger interfere with his enjoyment of it. In a few minutes, he was singing, as he walked:

"Once more on Hangtown's hills we'll delve;
On Murderer's Bar we'll mine,
At Darky's Tent and Boston Jim's,
You Bet, Red Dog, Port Wine,
On Poker Flat and Poor Man's Shack,
Once more our luck will try.
There nuggets can be found as thick
As stars up in the sky.

"Oh, it's a great country, gentlemen ——" Lonesome was soon declaring again.

The streets were bright with decoy lamps and radiance from canvas walls, gay with flags and streamers, and tumultuous with sound. Every saloon had its brass band, hurdy-gurdy or fiddlers, valiantly competing. Men's voices hummed, sang, shouted, rose excitedly, and roared out greetings. It was a nearly masculine world. Predominant were the American miners, swaggering, bearded sons of Titans, riotous with strength and sudden wealth, or the hope of wealth. Here and there were Spanish-American dandies, colorful in their wide sombreros, their white shirt fronts, and scarlet sashes; or, perhaps, a swarthy Moor, or a straight-featured Abyssinian, or a pig-tailed, blue-garbed Chinaman. Then there were professional loafers in plenty and of all races – men who mined in human weakness, sinister strays from more than the Seven Seas. And last, a new and growing element, whom the loafers eyed askance, keen-eyed, even-voiced men in creased suits, whose talk was of rents, dollar-per-front-foot real estate, cargoes, costs of building, and prices of merchandise--and particularly the costs of fires and thievery.

Low-toned and grave was that talk about fires – a very dangerous undertone. Five times had San Francisco been burned by thieves who looted amid the confusion. Five times had the citizens rebuilt, bigger and better each time, with the lots going up in value, while the ruins lay smoldering on them.

Last week another fire had been started, fortunately soon controlled. But another kindling had taken place–that of the city's anger. A noosed rope dangled from a pole projecting from the second story of the headquarters of the Committee of Vigilance. And a five-thousand- dollar reward was offered by that same committee to whoever caught the proper gallow's fruit, the next incendiary.

And along other lines, the forces of law and of lawlessness were coming to grips in San Francisco–the scum of Sydney Town and Little Chile against the merchant, mining, and working classes. Not long ago "The Hounds," an aggregation of crooks who openly sought control of the city, had been forcibly disbanded. But they were forming again more secretly, befriended by the professional gamblers and keepers of dives and lodging houses. Already there had been clashes between the two elements. So, beneath the turbulence, there was tension in the air that evening. Men walked warily, hands near holsters, or they stood in groups, shouldered together, talking in undertones.

Lonesome noticed all this, but carelessly. He had seen the same line-up in back-country mining camps. It didn't concern him at all. What did concern him was that the world was good, that he was on his fling from the mines, and must have it before returning.

He knew practically nobody in San Francisco; but, before long, it seemed that he knew everybody. In and out of doors he went, drinking a little, gambling a little, dancing a little, talking much and always astonishing the newcomers with his tales of the back country. He made the pale-faced, emotionless gamblers frown because of his careless flippancies, and he invited professional hangers-on to drink, and then invited them to pay. Oh, life was fine! Life was good!

A bell was ringing somewhere. But what was a bell? Queer, how the people scurried. "Fire!" said some one. Another; "The Vigilantes!" A second bell began to ring–or, rather, to toll; Louder and deeper, this was, than the other.

"*That's* for the Vigilantes," said some one alongside Lonesome at the bar. "The other was the alarm for fire."

"Lord!" cried Lonesome. "I got some things in a fire trap–the Heart and Hand." And he laughed. He was out on the street in a minute. Someone, running past him, said the fire was on Vallejo Street, west of Powell. The wind was blowing from the west. It was another plot to burn the city. The Heart and Hand Hotel was on Vallejo and Stockton, directly in the way of the fire.

Lonesome ran with the rest, but with no worry. If he lost what he had, it would not be much. When he turned into Vallejo, just on the edge of Little Chile, he saw a glare lighting up the fog ahead of him. He had not noticed till then that a thick fog had drifted in from the Pacific. The glare was well on the other side of Powell Street, so his hotel was safe enough as yet.

But it was odd–a crowd was in front of it, filling the entire street. This crowd was increasing in size every minute, and, as Lonesome drew nearer, he could hear a flare of high-pitched angry voices, above a roaring undertone, which sounded still more dangerous. Lonesome sobered. He had heard such sounds before, and on every one of those occasions that undertone had made for mischief.

"Lord! They got the man," he muttered, with a queer, unpleasant thrill of excitement.

Then, as he came closer: "No, they ain't got him, but they think they're goin' to."

He was on the edge of the crowd, which was boiling angrily about in the street. Light from a score of open windows of the hotel, two saloons, and a dance hall, illuminated the scene.

"They say they know who set the fire," an excited voice volunteered at his elbow. "They found kerosene and oil-soaked rags in his room. And two miners are ready to swear that they saw him set the blaze and then skip away before they could grab him."

"Fellow called 'Lonesome,' " another voice chimed in. "Landlord says he don't know nothin' else about him."

"Lonesome! Hell! Why, that's–that's—"

Then Lonesome could have bitten his tongue in two, as he did his sentence, for it came to him in a swirl of thought, first, that

he did not know by name a single soul he had met in the last two hours, and so would find it hard to prove his innocence; second, that the landlord knew him by name too well to be making a mistake that way; third, that if this crowd caught him, they might not wait for the Vigilantes to give him a trial. But it was too late. His words had been overheard.

"What's that? What you say?" His neighbor eyed him suspiciously.

"Lonesome! Sye, Hi know that beggar," a voice piped from Lonesome's left. It belonged to a little cockney, who was also stopping at the Heart and Hand. He looked around, and his eyes widened, as they rested on Lonesome.

"Why, you–you're—There the blighter stands, boys!" he yelled.

But he was standing there no longer. Life to Lonesome was precious, though motiveless. Hitherto he had borne it somewhat like a lighted candle, at the mercy of any whimsical wind. Lonesome laughed, thinking of Bunton and Magruger and the five-thousand reward and their revenge. Before any one could seize him, he whirled and sprinted down Vallejo Street. It was lucky he had not got farther into the crowd before he was recognized.

"Hi! Hey! Stop, you—" came the yells behind him, followed by a spattering of pistol shots.

Lonesome had taken the one way that was open to him, yet the direction of his flight completed the conviction of the crowd as to his guilt. He was plunging straight into Sydney Town, chief breeding place of crime and natural refuge for such as he was supposed to be.

But, since escape was the principal thing, it was well that he fled that way. Practically all orderly residents of San Francisco belonged either to the Vigilantes or the volunteer fire departments, and the signal bells had called them all to the fire-threatened section. The drifting miners and other transients had, of course, followed them. Consequently, there remained in Sydney Town few save its regular inhabitants, whose sympathies would be with the fugitive, and others too drunk to leave.

It was a sinister, dangerous place. Kerosene lamps irradiated canvas walls and threw dim light through the windows and between unmatched timbers of shabby saloons, lodging houses, dance halls, and gaming rooms.

Within, lurked "Sydney coves," crafty Chileans and Peruvians, flotsam and jetsam from all the tides of the world, crooks and murderers from every port. Drunken, maudlin laughter floated out upon the damp, foggy air of the night. From the seductively named "Live and Let Live," came quarreling, high-pitched voices, the sound of blows, a shot, then a sudden, suggestive silence.

But the street was almost deserted. Now and then skulking forms showed up ahead, but withdrew precipitately into alley or building before the sound of the running men. Underfoot were gullies and slippery mud, and the way was cluttered with piles of packing boxes and barrels and kegs and then more barrels. Lonesome dodged between them and around them, managing to keep some of them always between him and the pursuit, so that the shooting gradually stopped.

"Them sons-of-guns!" Lonesome muttered, angrier each moment at his enemies. "Them lyin' murderin', perjurin' —" Epithets failed him. "What I'll do to them will be a scorcher. Only–only—"

His thought of revenge stumbled impotently over the fact that, even if he escaped tonight, he would be a fugitive from San Francisco, and lucky if he could remain so. While they stayed on, "honest miners." Bah!

"Well, anyway, I ain't staked no claim here," thought Lonesome. "I can go." The pursuit had spilled over into Broadway and Green Street, paralleling Vallejo on the north and south, so he couldn't double back. Ahead of him were wooden wharves, thrusting like stubby fingers out into the bay.

"Hell! I can swim," he thought.

Suddenly, remembering something of the contour of this part of the water front, he slipped sidewise into one of the meanest of the mean streets of Sydney Town. Baxter Alley, it was called, bordered by two lines of dismal drinking places, with a tangle of flimsy dwellings at their backs. It was in such a place that he

might be expected to hide; and hide he did, for a minute, in the tangle of dwellings beyond the alley. Then he slipped cat-footed on; and when the crowd, coming up, began breaking in doors and dragging out occupants of the buildings, Lonesome was already letting himself out down into the little inlet of the bay, at the end of Baxter Alley.

He swam straight out, with a little parting flirt of the hand. Easy, this was! The fog enveloped him like a soft, black fleece. No fear now. He would be invisible from a searching boat a yard away. And he could swim all night, the salt water buoyed him up so perfectly. He made for the opposite shore, with long, clean, easy strokes. Surely he could make it.

But where *was* the opposite shore, and where was San Francisco? The fog enveloped both; he was lost in that moist and murky world. Not a single light was to be seen, nor a reflection on the sky. The wind had almost died down; there was no telling, anyway, how it was blowing out here, with the hills all around the bay, all jagged with gaps, and the Golden Gate beyond. This was surely the right direction. But, was it? Lost men walk in circles; do they swim in circles, too?

He swam a long time–a long, long time. Now and then he turned on his back and rested; but it was never much of a rest. His body grew steadily less buoyant. Waves broke over his face, strangling him. He thought of discarding his boots and revolver, but refrained. They were necessities, wherever he might land. He grew so tired that it was a torture to keep on trying, but he kept on.

He was rewarded, after a timeless period, by seeing two lights, like monstrous eyes, staring at him in the darkness. Hallucination born of terrible fatigue tried to whisper to him many grotesque frightening things about those lights, but reason told him they were the lights of a ship. And when they turned into dull balls of fire, pointing ghostly fingers toward him through the fog, he knew he was making way toward them. An eternity or so later, he found himself clinging to the stern-anchor chains of a small vessel. It was all he could do to hold on.

The low waves broke with a sibilant rippling along the vessel's

sides. The anchor chains grated slightly against her gunwales,as the long, low swells passed under her. Somewhere a rope chafed against a mast. There were no other sounds, though Lonesome listened and listened.

He saw that she was a half-clipper vessel of light tonnage, such as had been diverted by the hundreds from the Eastern coastwise traffic. It was possible that all on board were asleep, but more probable that they had deserted for the mines – captain, crew and all. But the lights fore and aft seemed to contradict that, unless she had been deserted so recently that they hadn't had time to burn out.

"By Jiminy, if I could get away with one of her boats!" muttered Lonesome. "Well, here goes for a try."

Strength had returned to him rapidly. Without great difficulty he climbed up the slanting anchor chain to the deck. But there followed disappointment. Both of the ship's boats were gone. It certainly appeared that she was deserted. If so, he was safe for a while; but he knew that in the morning the Vigilantes would search every ship in the harbor for him.

"I sure got to keep driftin' along. A raft would do. If only I was sure there's nobody on board to bother while I make one."

Returning aft, he crept through the hatchway and down the ladder to the lower deck. In darkness, like the inside of a pocket, he stole along the narrow companionway. Unexpectedly he came up against two boxes, one on top of the other, and the uppermost fell with a crash. Had they been placed there purposely as a warning device, he wondered. For a long minute he listend without stirring, but nothing happened. Coming to the door of what he thought likely was the captain's cabin, he pressed his ear against it.

Still nothing. No sound, that is, and yet it seemed to Lonesome that something stirred, setting up vibrations so delicate that his eardrums could not receive them. Perhaps he could not separate them from the faint sounds of the wind and the water and the indefinable murmur of the ship. There was something, but nothing fearful. Or, was there anything at all? Suddenly, growing

impatient with his thoughts, Lonesome flung the door inward.

Then his mouth opened agape. "Great Lord A'mighty!" it framed the words.

For, by the light of a flickering tallow candle in a bracket, Lonesome saw the girl of Bunton's picture, shrinking back from him against the outer wall of the cabin, raising a revolver in a very uncertain and wavering hand. And, though he knew she was going to shoot from very panic, fear and astonishment held him in his tracks.

And the next instant the cabin was filled with the crack and roar of the girl's gun, held in so nerveless a hand that, at the report, it clattered to the deck.

Lonesome, hit, staggered half around and leaned against the door. "Now you've done it," he said.

Then he laughed and involuntarily grimaced with pain at the same instant—a gargoylelike distortion of his features.

"Well, it took a girl to get me, anyway," he commented. The girl stared at him. Something in his voice, his laugh, his eyes, the boyish lines of his face, chased the fear from her eyes, but it was replaced by horror at what she had done. "Oh, I hope—I didn't mean to—I—"

"Just plumb carelessness, eh? I'm glad you didn't go for to shoot me. I guess I'd better sit down."

And, still gazing at her, as though he could not believe his eyes, he sank down upon a sea chest which stood near the door. "It ain't your shot so much, miss, as – as—"

For the first time in his life he fumbled for words. He meant to say that it was astonishment at the sight of her that weakened him; and it was not so farfetched an idea. The women whom Lonesome had known for two years had been either Amazonian creatures, strong, rough, semimasculine, or the unattractive women of the dance halls. Strong and supple enough she appeared, slender and erect; but daintily and femininely beautiful, from the top of her curl-crowned head to the worn soles of her shoes. She was like - why, she was like a flower! She was like sun-kissed arbors and Sunday-school picnics and other things he had known away back there in another life, which he

had never missed till now. She was like a look into heaven. Fatuously Lonesome smiled and then thought of Magruger and Bunton and their talk of her.

The change on his face frightened her and drew her closer to him. She went over to the sea chest and stood by his side, evidently now much agitated. "Are you—Where are you hit?"

"I suppose we'd ought to be thinkin' about that."

With a painful effort, Lonesome raised his left arm and felt of the crimson-soaked shirt beneath it. "It ain't much, I'm thinkin', Miss. But we'd ought to stop this bleedin'."

"Oh! Wait a minute."

Suddenly, with a firm compression of the lips, the girl became surprisingly efficient. She hurried over to a cabinet near the head of the single berth and came back with bandages, some liniment, and a bottle of brandy. Lonesome had his shirt partly off, and she helped him the rest of the way.

The bullet had luckily glanced off his ribs, but had passed through the muscles in front of and under the pit of his left arm. Not until the girl had swabbed off the wound and wrapped Lonesome's chest with bandages, did she speak. Then she looked at his water-soaked clothes and frowned doubtfully.

"Where did you come from?" she asked abruptly.

That *was* a question. How much should he tell her? "From the water, miss," he replied evasively, grinning.

"I can see that," she replied severely. "I mean—Well, anyway, you need dry clothes. Wait a minute." She left the cabin.

When she came back, she had a complete outfit of shore-going clothes of a rather good cut and fabric, which she placed on the floor before Lonesome.

"I'll be waiting outside," she said very formally. "When you've changed, rap on the door, and I'll come in."

The wound troubled Lonesome considerably, while he changed, but it troubled him equally that the clothes were several sizes too large. A fine figure he would make in them! Not that it mattered, of course. The things that mattered were: Who was the girl, and what was she doing here, and what of Bunton and Magruger? And what was he, Lonesome, going to do?

When he rapped, she entered instantly and came immediately to the point she had attempted before. "Now, maybe you'll tell me who you are, and where you are from, and what you're doing here?"

Lonesome began with the easiest question. "Why, I'm just Lonesome, miss. I am ——"

"Lonesome!" Her voice seemed to break queerly on the last syllable.

"Yes--just Lonesome. That's what they call me. My real name is Peter Wright, but they don't go so much on real names out here. All 'Yankee Joes' and 'Scar-faced Charleys' and 'Missouri Jacks' and so on. And I'm Lonesome."

"Oh! You're Lonesome."

The girl began to laugh oddly, with little choking attemps at self-control. Then she put her hands to her face, and at some particular point her laughter changed to sobs, but this Lonesome didn't know. He stared at her bewilderedly, almost resentfully. There was nothing about his name to go into hysterics about.

"Well, I don't mind. And if I don't see ——"

"Oh, I'm sorry! I'm ashamed!" She removed her hands, and he saw her struggling with tears. "But when you said that, if you knew how lonesome I've been the last four days— lonesome and afaid! For myself and for father, too. I——"

"Your father! Then you've ——Where is he?"

"Ashore." Suddenly she was on guard again. "He'll be back any minute now."

Lonesome looked at her, smiling pleasantly. "Now, miss, I ain't dangerous. My gun won't shoot, and this arm won't work, and you could push me over with a feather, if you shoved it against this shoulder. And, if I was as strong as twenty lions, I'd be just as harmless. Can't you just go on with what you started to tell me?"

She bit her lips, which tried to smile just a little in answer to his. But she kept her eyes on him. Certainly he did not look bad. Why, he was merely a boy, little older than herself. And there was something nice in his eyes. Before she knew it, she found herself talking to him.

"Yes, I'll tell you, though you haven't answered my questions yet. Father *may* be back any minute, but he's been gone four days. He's captain. The crew deserted as soon as we made harbor. He went ashore to try to get another crew, and – he's never come back."

"Oh, I see."

"He didn't want me to come," she went on, sensing disapproval in Lonesome's tone. "I didn't know till after he'd shipped the cargo that he was coming. Then, I made him take me. We're alone, daddy and I. Mother's gone. I didn't want to be left behind. And, besides, father—" She checked herself abruptly.

"Oh, I'm afraid he's been killed," she went on. "He *wouldn't* leave me here so long. He must've been killed, or else —" Again that odd pause. Clearly she was hiding some other fear concerning her father. "I got so afraid. And that was why I—"

She glanced in shame at Lonesome's wounded shoulder.

"Oh, I ain't blamin' you for pinkin' me," said Lonesome. "You done exactly right. I'm a desperate character, I am. If you'd seen me a couple of hours ago, with all of San Francisco after me, you'd have drilled me proper, perhaps. Now I'll tell you my story."

And he did, making a serio-comedy of it, and the girl smiled half of the time. That was pure selfishness on Lonesome's part, for when she smiled there came to Lonesome an indescribable tightening at the heart and a lifting of the spirits, very pleasant and wholly unique. Of course, he said nothing about Bunton having her picture, and the plans of Bunton and Magruger concerning her. There was no use to make her worry. But it all linked up, now. Bunton and Magruger had got the picture from her father, and they were probably responsible, directly or indirectly, for her father's disappearance.

So well were they acquainted by now, that Lonesome had no thought of her disbelieving his story, nor did she think of disbelieving. Toward the end, he could no longer make her smile.

"Oh! And they're still looking for you —the Vigilantes! You

must get away. You say you were going to build a raft. I'll help you. I'll show you where the carpenter's chest is, and ——"

"But I've changed my mind. I ain't figurin' on goin' now, miss———"

"My name's Rosa Steele. But why aren't you going?"

She knew already why he was not going, he thought. No use trying to lie to her, though he would not frighten her about Bunton and Magruger as yet. "Well, it's like this. You've been right in bein' afraid. You ain't safe here, not for a minute."

"But how about yourself? You've already told me that the Vigilantes will search the ships in the morning."

He had told her that. That had been a mistake. "Maybe they won't. And, if they do, they won't be all excited, like everybody was tonight. I guess I can reason with them."

"You don't believe that. They'll *hang you!*" He was thinking of Bunton's words. "Goin' on a long voyage—with company." He doubted if he could make her understand, even if he tried, the full danger she was in, though probably nothing would happen tonight. Bunton and Magruger had not yet made their haul. But he could not leave her. He would stay and see that the Vigilantes took her off, when they took *him* off, in the morning.

"Oh, pshaw, miss! They won't hang me. Besides, I couldn't get very far on a raft, anyway, not with this game arm, and after the time it'd take us to build it. I just got to stay."

His tone was bantering, but there was firmness under it, and Rosa gave up the argument. "After I've shot you," she said ruefully.

"It is too bad about that, because I won't be much use, especially with my cartridges all water soaked."

"Let's see." Rosa picked up his gun, which lay on the foot of the berth. "No, my cartridges wouldn't fit. But I've got——" She clipped off the sentence, eying him. "That doesn't matter. What I was going to say is, you take my gun. You see, I - I shoot the wrong people." She smiled at him.

"Oh, I——Do you think I ought to?" Lonesome was quite overcome by her smile and her trust in him--though he did sense

a reservation there–and by relief at being able to get his hand on a serviceable revolver again.

"Of course." She slipped a fresh cartridge into the empty chamber, took a cartridge belt from a peg on the wall, slipped the revolver upon it, and handed it to him. With some difficulty, using only one hand, he fastened it around his waist.

"That's fine and dandy." He couldn't repress his elation. "First time in two years my old shooting iron's been out of commission."

"You've been out here two years?"

"Yep. And, say, Miss Steele, it's a great old country." Once launched, his talk drove on under its own power. "Gold! Pockets full of it, creek bottoms yellow with it. I washed two thousand dollars outa one pan of dirt, once. Bought a chicken to celebrate with, and took forty dollars outa that fowl's crop. Saw one chunk of solid gold, weighed near two hundred pounds. I came in day 'fore yesterday, with fifteen thousand dollars in dust. I got it cached where it'll be good and safe, and there was plenty there already. Just picked it all up. Never staked a claim yet. Just drifted around and picked it up.

"And di'monds! I ain't tellin' everybody this, but back of where I was this last trip, back Nevada way——"

Lonesome's voice trailed off; his body grew tense; his hand moved toward his revolver butt, but halted midway.

Other eyes than Rosa's had widened at his story, but not with that look of stark, staring terror that had come to hers. And they had shifted from Lonesome's face to a point directly over Lonesome's shoulder, where the unguarded door stood open.

Fool, Lonesome called himself–triple-distilled, thrice-cursed fool! To sit with his back to that doorway! For his movement to turn and to draw was checked by a significant pressure against his spine, and a metallic voice said: "Put 'em up."

Dead men are useless, really. Slowly Lonesome lifted his hands —easy, with that left arm of his! Surely that was Bunton's voice. He sought and caught Rosa's eye and tried to flash her a reassuring message. He winked. Then, while she looked at him, his mobile face changed. In a moment a laughing devil lurked in

his eyes; his fluent, but strong, mouth became a loose-lipped, devil-may care one. This, while another familiar voice spoke behind him: "Well, if it ain't Lonesome himself. Damned if we ain't in luck tonight!" The speaker had reached from behind and was drawing Rosa's gun from its holster.

Lonesome slowly turned, meeting no objection, to face Magruger and Bunton. Magruger was leering at the girl; but Bunton had his eyes on Lonesome.

"Gee, I'm in luck, too!" said Lonesome. "I was hopin' you'd turn up."

"You was, eh? asked Bunton coldly. "That's nice."

"You're sure travelin' slow," grinned Magruger, "considerin' how much you're wanted ashore."

"The floosie shot me," explained Lonesome, jerking his head backward toward Rose. "So I couldn't get away. Then we made up—no use quarrelin'. But I'm sure ready to take that trip you was talkin' about tonight."

"You are, eh? How come you changed your mind?" questioned Bunton.

"Oh, hell! You're thinkin' of what I said tonight at the saloon," declared Lonesome. "Ain't you never had to make a bluff, yourself? I couldn't tell you, but there, at the very next table, a-listenin' was the *alcalde* from Hang-town. You know how they are up there, and they was lookin' for me just a little while ago. Seems they thought I was more of a collector than a miner, and that I was doin' more of my prospectin' on the trails than in the mines." Lonesome laughed suggestively. "In present company, I don't mind admittin' that I've found the gun a sight more profitable than the pan. But I had to make myself pure and white before that there *alcalde.*"

"You're lyin'."

"The devil I am! I'll show you, before we're many days older. I'll show you tonight, if— How many miners has got fifty thousand in dust and nuggets cached away?"

"Not many, I guess." Bunton was still looking at Lonesome

doubtfully, but the light of cupidity was growing in his eyes. He hesitated a moment and then suddenly came to a grinning resolution.

"Hey, Jack," he called over his shoulder to some one outside the door. "It's all right; nobody else on board. Come in."

"You see," he went on to Lonesome, "three men is little enough to run this craft, so when you turned us down we took on that other pard we was speakin' of. He's a little rough for us, as Magruger, here, said; but now I can see where his roughness may be useful."

"Introducin' Four-fingered Jack," said Magruger, with mock ceremony.

The third man entered the cabin. Lonesome, though his face kept its mask of smiling deviltry, felt a troop of chills coarse up and down his spine. There was something inhuman and terrifying about the newcomer. He was a Mexican, with more than a touch of Aztec, burly and powerful of body, with nearly black skin, gross, brutal features, and glittering, black eyes that darted from Rosa to Bunton and back again.

"Now, about that gold of yours," said Bunton. "I heard you tellin' the girl about it. I've been hearin' so much about it that I've got to thinkin' it's a lie. An' we don't need it, anyway, 'cause we made a haul for a lifetime tonight. But fifty thousand ain't anything to sneeze at. An' if you're what you say you are, why, we're pards.

"You can come along an' help us work the boat, anyway. With that game arm an' without a gun, you can't bother us at all. And if it's a lie about the gold, just say so now, and we'll forget it, because—what's a lie? But if you lie from now on, you'll wish you hadn't.Take a good look at Four-fingered Jack here?"

"Been lookin' right along," said Lonesome.

"Trigger fingers cut off by his countrymen 'cause of too great mortality in his neighborhood, but he's learned to shoot with the others. But that ain't what he's most useful for. He's an eddicated man, he is, along the lines of makin' people welcome death an' pray for it. He can do things that I couldn't do, nor

maybe watch; but, so help me the devil, I'll turn you over to him and let him enjoy himself if it turns out you are lying to us now. Say, is that gold real or a fairy story?"

"Real as ever way," said Lonesome.

"Well, can we get it without any danger, an' how long'll it take? 'Cause we got to be outa the Gate by daylight. Though, with this land breeze, that won't take long."

"It won't take more'n an hour to get it—less, likely. An' it's safe enough. You see, I rented one of them cabins out in the sand dunes, about half a mile off the Presidio Trail, took up a section of the floor, and buried the gold in the sand underneath. Then I just kept away from it entirely, except, of course, when I went there to bury more gold. That was always along toward mornin', so nobody ever saw me."

"An' you thought that was a smart trick," asked Magruger, "with the customhouse there to take care o' the gold for you? Of course, if you collected it like you say, you wouldn't want to put it in there. An', anyway, when you consider what happened to the customhouse tonight—"

"Never mind that now," said Bunton. "We got to hurry. First, we'll have to shift them boxes from our boat into this craft. When you lift 'em," he said to Lonesome, "you'll know we made our haul, all right. Then we'll go along, the five of us, an' get that gold o' yours. Come on now, you!"—to Rosa.

Lonesome turned to Rosa and let her pass before him out of the cabin. Extremity of danger seemed to have produced in her extremity of courage; her face was colorless, but proud and still. And there was a suggestion of power about her, too, of confidence, of some secret resolve, connoting a hidden strength. Puzzling that was, to Lonesome.

Lonesome grinned, as she passed him by, tried to look mockingly at her, and barely audibly he hummed, as they passed in single file down the companionway:

"Down in the walls of prison,
Down in the walls of jail;
Down in the walls of prison,
With no one to go my bail."

A very little later, the rowboat in which they left the ship had rounded North Point, and at Lonesome's direction was edging toward the beach, with Magruger and the Mexican working hard at the oars. Rosa sat silent in the stern seat, but Lonesome, in the prow, hummed other little snatches of reckless jailbird songs and talked incessantly with Bunton. Overleaping Bunton's own imagination, he laid plans for the future; of this man and that, cutthroats all, to be picked up farther south; of guns to be purchased; a certain cannon that could be procured; of golden cargoes to be taken, and an empire across the Mexican line, which lay waiting to be seized. The spirits of all dead and living pirates and filibusters lived in him while he talked, but Bunton listened with his own secret thoughts.

"Luck, just luck," said Lonesome at length, "that things have turned out so well. I meant to look you up tomorrow and join in with you, but you'd have been gone."

"You was darn forcible about refusin'," returned Bunton, not overamiably. "It pretty near cost you your neck. We was goin' to put that kerosene and stuff into another fellow's room, but you was so high minded we changed our plan. I don't mind tellin' you that we hoped you'd be caught an' hung."

"Considerin' it'd be worth five thousand to you, of course you would," chuckled Lonesome.

"Oh, hell! We never aimed to collect that five thousand, except, maybe, if our other plan didn't go through. What we wanted was the excitement of the fire an' the hangin' and so on. While that crowd was huntin' you, an' the rest of the town was fightin' the fire, do you think we was settin' on our thumbs? That was when we was snakin' out them boxes that we shifted from this boat."

"You must've emptied the customhouse," said Lonesome with much admiration.

"Pretty near did," Bunton went on, his vanity touched. "I might as well tell you, because, after this, you'll either be pardners with us or just the hole in a cipher. We've had a warehouse right next the customhouse rented for a month. We've been makin' a tunnel ever since, down and up again and through

the brick floor of the customhouse. And tonight we tapped the last tap and brought the good stuff out. Had a wagon waitin' and ran it down to the water front."

"And that was why you done in the girl's father, so you'd have his ship to get away in."

"Yes; only it wasn't necessary to do him in. We just helped him hunt for sailors in the beginnin' an' for different brands of liquor after that. First drink in two years, he said, when he took one outa Magruger's bottle; but, say, when he gets started he's a goer and a stayer. We kept him supplied with booze, with the money we took off him in the start. Last night, though, we slipped something extra into his drink. He's stowed away in a sailors' haven right now, and he won't wake up till tomorrow."

"Wouldn't it have been safer to kill him?" suggested Lonesome.

"Maybe," replied Bunton. A slow smile came over his face, hidden from Lonesome in the darkness. "Maybe," said Bunton deliberately, "it would be safer to kill you."

Lonesome got the impression that he had somewhat overshot the mark in pretending villainy. However, the trip was very near an end. Lonesome had kept close watch of the vague outlines of the sand ridges to the south. Now he muttered a word to the oarsmen, and they swung the boat inshore and ran her prow upon the beach.

Lonesome, followed closely by Bunton, crawled out of the boat. Magruger and Four-fingered Jack came after them, dragging the lightened boat well up on the shelving beach. Magruger extended a hand to help Rosa out, but she ignored it and leaped lightly to the sand.

"Al right! You show us the way," muttered Bunton to Lonesome. "And remember what'll happen to you if you don't lead us straight to the stuff."

Lonesome was remembering, all right, with some quavering of the flesh. He'd be delivered to Four-fingered Jack, and Bunton's tone told Lonesome that his efforts at cajoling had been a failure—that Bunton was as far from confidence in him as he had ever been.

What had to be done, then, must be done, not by stratagem, but by swift and decisive action; and here he was with one crippled arm and without weapons of any kind.

Now he must lead off, however, and so he started on. The fog had thinned a little. He could see the sand dunes, dotted by chaparral and sagebrush, for perhaps twenty feet ahead. Beyond that was the curtain of night and fog, and beyond that– Well, if he were lucky, the blacker curtain of death. For there was certainly no conceivable way in which *he* could escape.

They encountered no one. A lonely cabin loomed up in the fog; then another and another. These they skirted widely and silently, though they were probably deserted. It was only when the rains checked the mining in the back country that the miners returned to them. Indeed, the whole section was a waste, from Taylor Street to the Presidio.

They crossed the Presidio Trail. The sand was deeper and looser here. It impeded their steps and sucked at their feet. How far was it to the nearest peopled street of San Francisco? Lonesome wondered. A mile, perhaps? It was hard to estimate distance in these trackless dunes. Hard, indeed, to reckon direction, with this fog enshrouding all. More and more helpless appeared the fragment of a plan that Lonesome had conceived.

A dark bulk appeared ahead of them and took shape as a one-room log cabin. Lonesome stopped before the door. "Here it is," said he.

"Fine!" said Bunton tonelessly, coming up on Lonesome's right.

"You'll find it fine," Lonesome replied lightly. "Twenty-four-carat fine–pure gold and no dirt."

"Pure action's what we want now," said Bunton. "Hurry up and let us in." Now there was a dangerous strain in his voice.

Lonesome took a key from his pocket and stooped to the padlock. They all heard a slight metallic grating, as he tried to insert the key. He muttered with annoyance and tried again. He kept shifting his feet about in the sand, as though to gain a better position. "The darn thing's rusted," he said.

Magruger, behind Lonesome cursed viciously under his breath.

"Better get it open," he muttered dangerously. He pressed up between Lonesome and Bunton and peered down at the padlock.

"Maybe I could if I had a hairpin or something to dig it out with," said Lonesome. "Maybe the girl's got a hairpin."

"Give him a hairpin," said Bunton. "And hurry up."

"Yes, do, Rosa," said Lonesome.

Rosa had hesitated, but something in Lonesome's voice drew her forward. She came up on Lonesome's left and brushed lightly against his wounded shoulder, as she reached over to place the hairpin in his right hand. Her own hand received a slight pressure, as she did so. Their heads were close together, but Lonesome dared not whisper. He pushed her away, however—pushed her lightly and significantly to the left. Quickly she moved in that direction, as far as she dared. Perhaps three feet from the group. She stood there watching, knowing that something was to happen. Tensely she raised her right hand to the opening in the front of her dress.

Lonesome did not see this movement. Retaining the key somewhat awkwardly in the last two fingers of his right hand, he began picking at the lock with the hairpin, held with his thumb and first two fingers. Suddenly, to the accompaniment of an annoyed exclamation from him, the key fell, jingling upon a rock at his feet.

He stooped down slowly, careful of his wounded shoulder. But he came up as swiftly as a bent spring released. Magruger, next to Lonesome on the right, started a laugh, as he saw that blow coming. Lonesome hadn't room to strike effectively, and, anyway, Lonesome was half Magruger's strength and size. But the laugh was never finished, for Lonesome had come up with a rock in his hand.

Magruger went down as if struck by a hammer, and at the same instant Rosa darted around the corner of the cabin. As Lonesome struck, he had shouted to her to run; then pain, sudden, terrific, and well-nigh paralyzing, shot through him from his wounded muscles, torn open again by the exertion of the blow. Weak, confused, and almost unconscious, he sprawled heavily down across Magruger's thighs.

He felt himself going into oblivion, and he almost wished that it was death. Fear of what Four-fingered Jack and Bunton would do to him was upon him. But at that moment he was shocked back to consciousness again by the force of a tremendous discovery. By accident, or by an instinctive, unconscious effort, his right hand had found the revolver in Magruger's holster.

With the greatest effort of his life, Lonesome rallied his senses and dragged out the revolver. He knew his case was still hopeless, for Four-fingered Jack and Bunton must have their guns on him by now; but he might hold against the shock of their bullets a little while—he might keep them busy until—

Bunton and the Mexican had hesitated to shoot, because, in the darkness, they might easily have hit Magruger. And there was no great hurry; they had him, anyway, and a minute or so start would do Rosa no good. But now, as Lonesome twisted toward them, he found Four-fingered Jack right before him, with his gun swinging down to the aim.

"Don't kill him! Save him to play with!" Bunton was rasping malevolently.

Four-fingered Jack's gun, not five feet away, steadied upon Lonesome's right shoulder. Lonesome was trying to prop himself up with his disabled arm, so he could get his right arm up to fire. Then Magruger, struggling back to consciousness, heaved upward under Lonesome. Lonesome slid off him to the left, against the wall of the cabin, and the Mexican's bullet went wide.

Cursing, Four-fingered Jack followed up and raised his gun again. Lonesome heard the report, but felt no bullet's impact, nor saw the flash of the Mexican's gun. Instead, there seemed a flash at the corner of the cabin. For an instant Lonesome searched the darkness for the origin of it; then he turned his attention again to Four-fingered Jack. But Four-fingered Jack was sprawling on the ground.

Bunton, with an almost whimpering cry of rage, as of a devil baffled, had turned and was running in the direction from which had come that mysterious shot.

Mysterious? A flashing memory came to Lonesome of the

sentence Rosa had begun, then broken off, when she gave him her gun. She's started to tell him that she had—what? The sound of the shot from the corner of the cabin was still ringing in Lonesome's ears; it was the unmistakable crack of a derringer, tiniest of guns and most easily concealed.

It was Rosa, then, who had saved him. Rosa had refused to take her chance and leave him there; her flight had only taken her around the cabin. But Rosa could no longer save herself, for a derringer carries only one bullet. And Bunton had turned the corner.

Lonesome was there in a moment. He saw Rosa fleeing down the opposite side of a sand dune, not fifty feet away. Bunton, driven by insensate anger or some mad design, was close behind her. A little farther, and they would both pass out of sight behind the dune.

Lonesome might stagger after them, but not fast enough, for he was weak from the renewed bleeding from his wound. He leaned against the wall of the cabin to steady himself, and, with a wordless prayer, he swung up Magruger's gun, with the accurate aim of a good shot. In an instant, and for a second, he was like a statue, the fingers with which he held the gun nerveless as ivory and as unshaking.

The gun flamed, cracked, recoiled. Had it been his own, Lonesome would not have waited to see the effect of the bullet. As it was, he stood for a moment, observant. Then he turned to Magruger, swaying uncertainly on his feet, and Four-fingered Jack, still on the ground.

"Your friend ain't dead, but he's ceased to trouble," he announced. "An' now I guess we'd better all take a sashay into San Francisco. Me to collect an apology an' thanks, an' you to collect—your dues."

On a bright morning a little later, Rosa and Lonesome leaned on the rail of her father's ship and watched an approaching clipper slip past toward the line of wharves that edged the wood-and-canvas city. The clipper's upper deck was jammed with men of all sorts, conditions, and nationalities, wild with their

first glimpse of the land of promise—the land of gold. From well forward came a roaring song from a hundred throats, rolling over the water toward the smaller vessel like a mighty chorus:

"I'll soon be in San Francisco,
And then I'll look around;
And when I see the gold lumps there,
I'll pick them off the ground.
I'll scrape the mountains clean, girl,
I'll drain the rivers dry,
A pocketful of rocks bring home—
Suzanna, don't you cry!"

"And they will, too, Rosa," said Lonesome. "Gee, it's a great old country! Gold—gold in the river beds, gold on the hills, gold in the pockets——"

"But not in yours, Lonesome," interrupted Rosa, smiling mischievously yet tenderly, at the memory of his fable of a cache of gold.

Lonesome flushed. "Aw, well, I've just been driftin' around. Never even staked a claim. But it's there, all right. I've seen— And there's other things to this country. Things *grow* out here. I've seen trees four hundred feet high—and a field of beets that weighed a hundred pounds each, the smallest of 'em. It's a grand country, Rosa."

"I don't see why, then," questioned Rosa, "you're coming back with us?"

"Well, you see, somebody's got to help your father work her back. And there's four friends of mine just come back from the mines that say they'll ship if I will. And, besides—well, Rosa, a fellow gets tired just driftin' around. A fellow kinda wants to stake a claim some time. And—well, that's it."

"So you're settling down by starting on a trip around the Horn. What a funny idea! And you're staking a claim on—My, I'd just like to know what you're staking a claim on."

"Would you, Rosa?" Suddenly he turned and looked at her squarely, with eyes both timid and boldly questioning. And he might have pressed the question, had not her own clear eyes grown timid also, so that they were compelled to look away—look anywhere but at him. They stood there joined in a

mutual, increasing embarrassment, with Lonesome tongue-tied for once, but with the knowledge warming him through that words were not needed to tell her what he meant. And they might have stood there till sunset, had not the sound of Rosa's father—sobered again and for a lifetime—coming up the ladder broken the spell and startled them to another quick exchange of glances.

"And it's my first claim," blurted Lonesome, as they turned away from the rail.

"Mine, too," said Rosa, but in so low a tone that he could not hear her.

The Luck Of Roaring Camp

by BRET HARTE

THERE WAS COMMOTION in Roaring Camp. It could not have been a fight, for in 1850 that was not novel enough to have called together the entire settlement. The ditches and claims were not only deserted, but "Tuttle's grocery" had contributed its gamblers, who, it will be remembered, calmly continued their game the day that French Pete and Kanaka Joe shot each other to death over the bar in the front room. The whole camp was collected before a rude cabin on the outer edge of the clearing. Conversation was carried on in a low tone, but the name of a woman was frequently repeated. It was a name familiar enough in the camp—"Cherokee Sal."

Perhaps the less said of her the better. She was a coarse and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman. But at that time she was the only woman in Roaring Camp, and was just then lying in sore extremity, when she most needed the ministration of her own sex. Dissolute, abandoned, and irreclaimable, she was yet suffering a martyrdom hard enough to bear even when veiled by sympathizing womanhood, but now terrible in her loneliness. The primal curse had come to her in that original isolation which must have made the punishment of the first transgression so dreadful. It was, perhaps, part of the expiation of her sin that, at a moment when she most lacked her sex's intuitive tenderness

and care, she met only the half-contemptuous faces of her masculine associates. Yet a few of the spectators were, I think, touched by her sufferings. Sandy Tipton thought it was "rough on Sal," and in the contemplation of her condition, for a moment rose superior to the fact that he had an ace and two bowers in his sleeve.

It will be seen also that the situation was novel. Deaths were by no means uncommon in Roaring Camp, but a birth was a new thing. People had been dismissed the camp effectively, finally, and with no possibility of return; but this was the first time that anybody had been introduced *ab initio.* Hence the excitement.

"You go in there, Stumpy," said a prominent citizen known as "Kentuck," addressing one of the loungers. "Go in there, and see what you kin do. You've had experience in them things."

Perhaps there was a fitness in the selection. Stumpy, in other climes, had been the putative head of two families; in fact, it was owing to some legal informality in these proceedings that Roaring Camp—a city of refuge—was indebted to his company. The crowd approved the choice, and Stumpy was wise enough to bow to the majority. The door closed on the extempore surgeon and midwife, and Roaring Camp sat down outside, smoked its pipe, and awaited the issue.

The assemblage numbered about a hundred men. One or two of these were actual fugitives from justice, some were criminal, and all were reckless. Physically they exhibited no indication of their past lives and character. The greatest scamp had a Raphael face, with a profusion of blond hair; Oakhurst, a gambler, had the melancholy air and intellectual abstraction of a Hamlet; the coolest and most courageous man was scarcely over five feet in height, with a soft voice and an embarrassed, timid manner. The term "roughs" applied to them was a distinction rather than a definition. Perhaps in the minor details of fingers, toes, ears, etc., the camp may have been deficient, but these slight omissions did not detract from their aggregate force. The strongest man had but three fingers on his right hand; the best shot had but one eye.

Such was the physical aspect of the men that were dispersed around the cabin. The camp lay in a triangular valley between

two hills and a river. The only outlet was a steep trail over the summit of a hill that faced the cabin, now illuminated by the rising moon. The suffering woman might have seen it from the rude bunk whereon she lay—seen it winding like a silver thread until it was lost in the stars above.

A fire of withered pine boughs added sociability to the gathering. By degrees the natural levity of Roaring Camp returned. Bets were freely offered and taken regarding the result. Three to five that "Sal would get through with it"; even that the child would survive; side bets as to the sex and complexion of the coming stranger. In the midst of an excited discussion an exclamation came from those nearest the door, and the camp stopped to listen. Above the swaying and moaning of the pines, the swift rush of the river, and the crackling of the fire rose a sharp, querulous cry—a cry unlike anything heard before in the camp. The pines stopped moaning, the river ceased to rush, and the fire to crackle. It seemed as if Nature had stopped to listen too.

The camp rose to its feet as one man! It was proposed to explode a barrel of gunpowder; but in consideration of the situation of the mother, better counsels prevailed, and only a few revolvers were discharged; for whether owing to the rude surgery of the camp, or some other reason, Cherokee Sal was sinking fast. Within an hour she had climbed, as it were, that rugged road that led to the stars, and so passed out of Roaring Camp, its sin and shame, forever. I do not think that the announcement disturbed them much, except in speculation as to the fate of the child. "Can he live now?" was asked of Stumpy. The answer was doubtful. The only other being of Cherokee Sal's sex and maternal condition in the settlement was an ass. There was some conjecture as to fitness, but the experiment was tried. It was less problematical than the ancient treatment of Romulus and Remus, and apparently as successful.

When these details were completed, which exhausted another hour, the door was opened, and the anxious crowd of men, who had already formed themselves into a queue, entered in single file. Beside the low bunk or shelf, on which the figure of the

mother was starkly outlined below the blankets, stood a pine table. On this a candlebox was placed, and within it, swathed in staring red flannel, lay the last arrival at Roaring Camp. Beside the candlebox was placed a hat. Its use was soon indicated. "Gentlemen," said Stumpy, with a singular mixture of authority and *ex officio* complacency– "gentlemen will please pass in at the front door, round the table, and out at the back door. Them as wishes to contribute anything toward the orphan will find a hat handy." The first man entered with his hat on; he uncovered, however, as he looked about him, and so unconsciously set an example to the next. In such communities good and bad actions are catching. As the procession filed in comments were audible– criticisms addressed perhaps rather to Stumpy in the character of showman: "Is that him?" "Mighty small specimen;" "Hasn't more'n got the color;" "Ain't bigger nor a derringer." The contributions were as characteristic: A silver tobacco box; a doubloon; a navy revolver, silver mounted; a gold specimen; a very beautifully embroidered lady's handkerchief (from Oakhurst the gambler); a diamond breastpin; a diamond ring (suggested by the pin, with the remark from the giver that he "saw that pin and went two diamonds better"); a slung shot; a Bible (contributor not detected); a golden spur; a silver teaspoon (the initials, I regret to say, were not the giver's); a pair of surgeon's shears; a lancet; a Bank of England note for £5; and about $200 in loose gold and silver coin. During these proceedings Stumpy maintained a silence as impassive as the dead on his left, a gravity as inscrutable as that of the newly born on his right. Only one incident occurred to break the monotony of the curious procession. As Kentuck bent over the candlebox half curiously, the child turned, and, in a spasm of pain, caught at his groping finger and held it fast for a moment. Kentuck looked foolish and embarrassed. Something like a blush tried to assert itself in his weather-beaten cheek. "The d–d little cuss!" he said, as he extricated his finger, with perhaps more tenderness and care than he might have been deemed capable of showing. He held that finger a little apart from its fellows as he went out, and examined it curiously. The examination provoked the same original remark

in regard to the child. In fact, he seemed to enjoy repeating it. "He rastled with my finger," he remarked to Tipton, holding up the member, "the d—d little cuss!"

It was four o'clock before the camp sought repose. A light burnt in the cabin where the watchers sat, for Stumpy did not go to bed that night. Nor did Kentuck. He drank quite freely, and related with great gusto his experience, invariably ending with his characteristic condemnation of the newcomer. It seemed to relieve him of any unjust implication of sentiment, and Kentuck had the weaknesses of the nobler sex. When everybody else had gone to bed, he walked down to the river and whistled reflectingly. Then he walked up the gulch past the cabin, still whistling with demonstrative unconcern. At a large redwood tree he paused and retraced his steps, and again passed the cabin. Halfway down to the river's bank he again paused, and then returned and knocked at the door. It was opened by Stumpy. "How goes it?" said Kentuck, looking past Stumpy toward the candlebox. "All serene!" replied Stumpy. "Anything up?" "Nothing." There was a pause—an embarrassing one—Stumpy still holding the door. Then Kentuck had recourse to his finger, which he held up to Stumpy. "Rastled with it—the d—d little cuss," he said, and retired.

The next day Cherokee Sal had such rude sepulture as Roaring Camp afforded. After her body had been committed to the hillside, there was a formal meeting of the camp to discuss what should be done with her infant. A resolution to adopt it was unanimous and enthusiastic. But an animated discussion in regard to the manner and feasibility of providing for its wants at once sprang up. It was remarkable that the argument partook of none of those fierce personalities with which discussions were usually conducted at Roaring Camp. Tipton proposed that they should send the child to Red Dog—a distance of forty miles—where female attention could be procured. But the unlucky suggestion met with fierce and unanimous opposition. It was evident that no plan which entailed parting from their new acquisition would for a moment be entertained. "Besides," said Tom Ryder, "them

fellows at Red Dog would swap it, and ring in somebody else on us." A disbelief in the honesty of other camps prevailed at Roaring Camp, as in other places.

The introduction of a female nurse in the camp also met with objection. It was argued that no decent woman could be prevailed to accept Roaring Camp as her home, and the speaker urged that "they didn't want any more of the other kind." This unkind allusion to the defunct mother, harsh as it may seem, was the first spasm of propriety—the first symptom of the camp's regeneration. Stumpy advanced nothing. Perhaps he felt a certain delicacy in interfering with the selection of a possible successor in office. But when questioned, he averred stoutly that he and "Jinny"—the mammal before alluded to—could manage to rear the child. There was something original, independent, and heroic about the plan that pleased the camp. Stumpy was retained. Certain articles were sent for to Sacramento. "Mind," said the treasurer, as he pressed a bag of gold dust into the expressman's hand, "the best that can be got—lace, you know, and filigree work and frills—d—n the cost!"

Strange to say, the child thrived. Perhaps the invigorating climate of the mountain camp was compensation for material deficiencies. Nature took the foundling to her broader breast. In that rare atmosphere of the Sierra foothills—that air pungent with balsamic odor, that ethereal cordial at once bracing and exhilarating—he may have found food and nourishment, or a subtle chemistry that transmuted ass's milk to lime and phosphorus. Stumpy inclined to the belief that it was the latter and good nursing. "Me and that ass," he would say, "has been father and mother to him! Don't you," he would add, apostrophizing the helpless bundle before him, "never go back on us."

By the time he was a month old the necessity of giving him a name became apparent. He had generally been known as "The Kid," "Stumpy's Boy," "The Coyote" (an allusion to his vocal powers), and even by Kentuck's endearing diminutive of "The d—d little cuss." But these were felt to be vague and unsatisfactory, and were at last dismissed under another

influence. Gamblers and adventurers are generally superstitious, and Oakhurst one day declared that the baby had brought "the luck" to Roaring Camp. It was certain that of late they had been successful. "Luck" was the name agreed upon, with the prefix of Tommy for greater convenience. No allusion was made to the mother, and the father was unknown. "It's better," said the philosophical Oakhurst, "to take a fresh deal all around. Call him Luck, and start him fair." A day was accordingly set apart for the christening. What was meant by this ceremony the reader may imagine who has already gathered some idea of the reckless irreverence of Roaring Camp. The master of ceremonies was one "Boston," a noted wag, and the occasion seemed to promise the greatest facetiousness. This ingenious satirist had spent two days in preparing a burlesque of the Church service, with pointed local allusions. The choir was properly trained, and Sandy Tipton was to stand godfather. But after the procession had marched to the grove with music and banners, and the child had been deposited before a mock altar, Stumpy stepped before the expectant crowd. "It ain't my style to spoil fun, boys," said the little man, stoutly eying the faced around him, "but it strikes me that this thing ain't exactly on the squar. It's playing it pretty low down on this yer baby to ring in fun on him that he ain't goin' to understand. And ef there's goin' to be any godfathers around, I'd like to see who's got any better rights than me." A silence followed Stumpy's speech. To the credit of all humorists be it said that the first man to acknowledge its justice was the satirist thus stopped of his fun. "But," said Stumpy, quickly following up his advantage, "we're here for a christening, and we'll have it. I proclaim you Thomas Luck, according to the laws of the United States and the State of California, so help me God." It was the first time that the name of the Deity had been otherwise uttered than profanely in the camp. The form of christening was perhaps even more ludicrous than the satirist had conceived; but strangely enough, nobody saw it and nobody laughed. "Tommy" was christened as seriously as he would have been under a Christian roof, and cried and was comforted in as orthodox fashion.

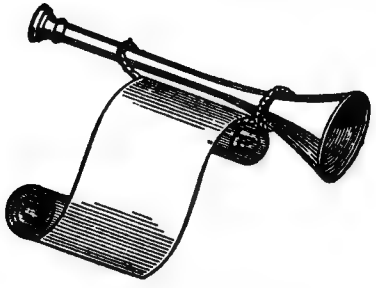
And so the work of regeneration began in Roaring Camp. Almost imperceptibly a change came over the settlement. The cabin assigned to "Tommy Luck"—or "The Luck," as he was more frequently called—first showed signs of improvement. It was kept scrupulously clean and whitewashed. Then it was boarded, clothed, and papered. The rosewood cradle, packed eighty miles by mule, had, in Stumpy's way of putting it, "sorter killed the rest of the furniture." So the rehabilitation of the camp became a necessity. The men who were in the habit of lounging in at Stumpy's to see "how 'The Luck' got on" seemed to appreciate the change, and in self-defense the rival establishment of "Tuttle's grocery" bestirred itself and imported a carpet and mirrors. The reflections of the latter on the appearance of Roaring Camp tended to produce stricter habits of personal cleanliness. Again Stumpy imposed a kind of quarantine upon those who aspired to the honor and privilege of holding The Luck. It was a cruel mortification to Kentuck—who, in the carelessness of a large nature and the habits of frontier life, had begun to regard all garments as a second cuticle, which, like a snake's, only sloughed off through decay—to be debarred this privilege from certain prudential reasons. Yet such was the suble influence of innovation that he thereafter appeared regularly every afternoon in a clean shirt and face still shining from his ablutions. Nor were moral and social sanitary laws neglected. "Tommy," who was supposed to spend his whole existence in a persistent attempt to repose, must not be disturbed by noise. The shouting and yelling, which had gained the camp its infelicitous title, were not permitted within hearing distance of Stumpy's. The men conversed in whispers or smoked with Indian gravity. Profanity was tacitly given up in these sacred precincts, and throughout the camp a popular form of expletive, known as "D-n the luck!" and "Curse the luck!" was abandoned, as having a new personal bearing. Vocal music was not interdicted, being supposed to have a soothing, tranquilizing quality; and one song, sung by "Man-o'-War Jack," an English sailor from her Majesty's Australian colonies, was quite popular as a lullaby. It was a lugubrious recital of the exploits of "the Arethusa,

Seventy-four," in a muffled minor, ending with a prolonged dying fall at the burden of each verse. "On b-oo-o-ard of the Arethusa." It was a fine sight to see Jack holding The Luck, rocking from side to side as if with the motion of a ship, and crooning forth this naval ditty. Either through the peculiar rocking of Jack or the length of his song—it contained ninety stanzas, and was continued with conscientious deliberation to the bitter end—the lullaby generally had the desired effect. At such times the men would lie at full length under the trees in the soft summer twilight, smoking their pipes and drinking in the melodious utterances. An indistinct idea that this was pastoral happiness pervaded the camp. "This 'ere kind o' think," said the Cockney Simmons, meditatively reclining on his elbow, "is 'evingly." It reminded him of Greenwich.

On the long summer days The Luck was usually carried to the gulch from whence the golden store of Roaring Camp was taken. There, on a blanket spread over pine boughs, he would lie while the men were working in the ditches below. Latterly there was a rude attempt to decorate this bower with flowers and sweet-smelling shrubs, and generally some one would bring him a cluster of wild honeysuckles, azaleas, or the painted blossoms of Las Mariposas. The men had suddenly awakened to the fact that there were beauty and significance in these trifles, which they had so long trodden carelessly beneath their feet. A flake of glittering mica, a fragment of variegated quartz, a bright pebble from the bed of the creek, became beautiful to eyes thus cleared and strengthened, and were invariably put aside for The Luck. It was wonderful how many treasures the woods and hillsides yielded that "would do for Tommy." Surrounded by playthings such as never child out of fairyland had before, it is to be hoped that Tommy was content. He appeared to be serenely happy, albeit there was an infantine gravity about him, a contemplative light in his round gray eyes, that sometimes worried Stumpy. He was always tractable and quiet, and it is recorded that once, having crept beyond his "corral"—a hedge of tessellated pine boughs, which surrounded his bed—he dropped over the bank on

his head in the soft earth, and remained with his mottled legs in the air in that position for at least five minutes with unflinching gravity. He was extricated without a murmur. I hesitate to record the many other instances of his sagacity, which rest, unfortunately, upon the statements of prejudiced friends. Some of them were not without a tinge of superstition. "I crep' up the bank just now," said Kentuck one day, in a breathless state of excitement, "and dern my skin if he wasn't a-talking to a jay bird as was a-sittin' on his lap. There they was, just as free and sociable as anything you please, a-jawin. at each other just like two cherrybums." Howbeit, whether creeping over the pine boughs or lying lazily on his back blinking at the leaves above him, to him the birds sang, the squirrels chattered, and the flowers bloomed. Nature was his nurse and playfellow. For him she would let slip between the leaves golden shafts of sunlight that fell just within his grasp; she would send wandering breezes to visit him with the balm of bay and resinous gum; to him the tall redwoods nodded familiarly and sleepily, the bumblebees buzzed, and the rooks cawed a slumbrous accompaniment.

For Those Who Can't Get Enough Macabre Fiction, Old And New



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Such was the golden summer of Roaring Camp. They were "flush times," and the luck was with them. The claims had yielded enormously. The camp was jealous of its privileges and looked suspiciously on strangers. No encouragement was given to immigration, and, to make their seclusion more perfect, the land on either side of the mountain wall that surrounded the camp they duly pre-empted. This, and a reputation for singular proficiency with the revolver, kept the reserve of Roaring Camp inviolate. The expressmen—their only connecting link with the surrounding world—sometimes told wonderful stories of the camp. He would say, "They've a street up there in 'Roaring' that would lay over any street in Red Dog. They've got vines and flowers round their houses, and they wash themselves twice a day. But they're mighty rough on strangers, and they worship an Ingin baby."

With the prosperity of the camp came a desire for further improvement. It was proposed to build a hotel in the following spring, and to invite one or two decent families to reside there for the sake of The Luck, who might perhaps profit by female companionship. The sacrifice that this concession to the sex cost these men, who were fiercely skeptical in regard to its general virtue and usefulness, can only be accounted for by their affection for Tommy. A few still held out. But the resolve could not be carried into effect for three months, and the minority meekly yielded in the hope that something might turn up to prevent it. And it did.

The winter of 1851 will long be remembered in the foothills. The snow lay deep on the Sierras, and every mountain creek became a river, and every river a lake. Each gorge and gulch was transformed into a tumultuous watercourse that descended the hillsides, tearing down giant trees and scattering its drift and debris along the plain. Red Dog had been twice under water, and Roaring Camp had been forewarned. "Water put the gold into them gulches," said Stumpy. "It's been here once and will be here again!" And that night the North Fork suddenly leaped over its banks and swept up the triangular valley of Roaring Camp.

In the confusion of rushing water, crashing trees, and crackling timber, and the darkness which seemed to flow with the water and blot out the fair valley, but little could be done to collect the scattered camp. When the morning broke, the cabin of Stumpy, nearest the river-bank, was gone. Higher up the gulch they found the body of its unlucky owner; but the pride, the hope, the joy, The Luck, of Roaring Camp had disappeared. They were returning with sad hearts when a shout from the bank recalled them.

It was a relief-boat from down the river. They had picked up, they said, a man and an infant, nearly exhausted, about two miles below. Did anybody know them, and did they belong here?

It needed but a glance to show them Kentuck lying there, cruelly crushed and bruised, but still holding The Luck of Roaring Camp in his arms. As they bent over the strangely assorted pair, they saw that the child was cold and pulseless. "He is dead," said one. Kentuck opened his eyes. "Dead?" he repeated feebly. "Yes, my man, and you are dying too." A smile lit the eyes of the expiring Kentuck. "Dying!" he repeated. "He's a-taking me with him. Tell the boys I've got The Luck with me now;" and the strong man, clinging to a straw, drifted away into the shadowy river that flows forever to the unknown sea.

The Lady Or The Trigger

by CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

It was an accident that Stede Lance's lightning move just as the sheriff was about to finish the handcuffing job resulted in his being cuffed to another man — but he had made his getaway. Then, in the desert, he found that the other man was a woman.

THE FIRST COOL BREATH of the desert night touched Lance's face as his tired horse topped the mesa and swung to the protecting shadow of the black rock from which the rider could look back into the blur of moonlight.

Lance listened to the faintest sound across the dead and shining valley out of which he had fled to this high divide which opened to the crusted alkali and pathless sand drifts of another yet to be crossed. The Panamint, and across there the black, sinister shapes of the Funeral Range mocking his getaway.

"If I was shut o' this iron—and him —" He lifted his right hand. The handcuff on it clinked. Lance, the outlaw, watched

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with the stealth of a hawk.Then he looked down at the slender figure on the saddle before him.

He had not meant to hurt this boy who had blocked his escape from the deputies at Pana Springs. Not another human life—no, Lance had three marked against him now, and he was but twenty-one.

The outlaw listened before he drew down the handkerchief from his prisoner's mouth. The boy in these school knickerbockers must have fainted. Lance could not see his face in this shadow, but he had not moved. Scared cold, perhaps, at finding his right hand shackled to the right hand of an escaping, desperate young killer.

Lance moved out to where the moon, like a yellow drum, peered through a far canon cleft, its light like a mist on the valley floor below. Now he could see his helpless burden. He lifted the arm bound to his own by the steel.

The cuff clinked, and Lance stopped. He feared sound. On a desert night, it travels so far. Lance watched cunningly. He feared motion, sound, shadow out here on this rock ridge in the brilliant moonlight. Looking back into the great flat he saw the flash of a motor car's lights miles away on the Springs road.

He cursed the motor cars! What chance had a good man with a good horse he had taken by a fair ruse, against the grim trailing engines on the flat? These dusty chugging devils against a sweating cayuse which must find food and water tomorrow in the desert sun?

"Anyways, they'll have trouble on the ridge. They'll have to keep on around by Pacheco Gap, and I'll be turned south then. Give me four hours, and I'll fool 'em some."

He drove the animal up and on to get out of the gray ash earth onto the sere black rock slopes which would leave no hoof marks. Then he thought of Milroy, the sheriff.

Milroy had been about to snap that other cuff onto Cunningham's wrist and fight a way to the railroad station with Lance between them when Lance saw his chance. He swung his arm and drove the steel cuff down across the sheriff's temple,

and then jerked Cunningham's gun from its holster and backed from the deputy into the hotel yard.

The mob milling around in front did not even hear the affair in the back washroom. Lance had slipped to the lane and around back of Purvis' schoolhouse, where he had come upon this boy to whom he was now shackled. Lance had meant no more than to leave him senseless in the dust, and then that open handcuff had snapped about the rider's arm.

Nothing to do then but swing up behind and ride to the foothill trail. Only it was strange that this slender stripling had fainted in Lance's arms! The fugitive grew suspicious at this limp silence. In the shadows he had not seen his captive's face.

"What's the matter with you?" he grunted doggedly, now that the first rush of the escape was over. He had to rest this animal they rode—there would be desert miles and sun tomorrow if Stede Lance hoped to escape the rope that the men of Pana Springs had bought, new and tight twisted, at Cullom's store for him tonight.

"What you blowed out for? I didn't aim to hurt you."

His right arm lay down along the right arm of the prisoner, the irons holding them so, as Lance had kept the senseless body before the pommel. So he had to twist about to see the face.

In this light he started. The other's eyes were opened and staring silently out to the moon, wavering and bulbous as it cleared the serrated range. The handkerchief gag had fallen from chin to throat.

Lance said nothing for a time. He followed the other's stare out to where the waterless levels of the valley were showing like a dulled silver carpet under the moonlight.

"A woman," Stede Lance muttered dully. "How come that, now? I come up with you back o' the school on the Pana road."

"You—what is this for? Where am I—what does this mean?"

The girl's slight form struggled up before him. She straightened out her arm and his followed. The links of the steel bracelet clinked as she relaxed. She tried to whirl about and see him.

"I can't help that." Stede Lance laughed tiredly. "I didn't mean that. I swung out for the animal and tried to jerk you out

of the saddle. I thought it was a kid. The iron was danglin' from my wrist, and when I jerked at you, you struck at me. The iron snapped on you. And I had to go. You fainted right afore me in the saddle, but I had to slope out. This is the first I knowed, ma'am."

She had got about where she could see him. In the full light they stared at one another. In a silence that told them enough.

"Handcuffed to me! Who are you?"

He saw her white face close to his. Wide eyes fiercely on him undaunted. She struggled furiously against the shackle, and then relaxed. There was no use of this. Wherever she was and with whom, there was no use to fight chilled steel and the sinister glimmer of this desert height. Or the man bound to her.

He touched his horse and the brute wound slowly up and into the cleft to the last divide. They could see back at a turn. The valley they were leaving—the dry, white sinks, the low rises of the desert floor with the sand eddied about sunken rocks and sagebrush. And lights, now. Four lights like pitiless yellow eyes searching the road from Pana Springs.

Stede Lance set spur to the slow-climbing animal. The posse could come to the mesa's foot in those cars, but no farther. He'd have an hour or two; only, over this grim basaltic ridge, clear and terrible as the airless ranges of the moon, what was there for a hunted man?

It brought a smile to his bitter lips. What hope tomorrow, in the Panamint, for a hunted man? Only he was young, and to swing off from a stock-loading chute at a rope's end—youth writhes against that. Not the shame, not the pain, but it is the end of youth's high flame. In their hearts the young die miserably at the bravest. That is why they mock the more gallantly at it.

So young Lance, the three-time killer, hoped for that waterless sink of sun and sand tomorrow as for Eden. Free there, at least. Only, now, this girl whose khaki shirt and knickers had fooled him in the starlight back of Purvis' schoolhouse. Her close-cut hair and boy's cap. He had jerked the handkerchief over her face

and tied it, and that was when the handcuff, dangling at his wrist, had snapped on her fighting arm.

Until now he had not thought what he must do in the end to be free of this burden. Milroy had the keys to the cuffs which bound him to this girl. Milroy, back there, disabled—perhaps killed from the blow Lance dealt him. Well, no matter. Lance had to keep on now and figure this thing out later.

The girl did not cry out. She seemed to feel the uselessness of that when the tired brute surmounted the last spur of the ridge and the terrible shining sinks of the Panamint showed before them.

The thought of the desert which barred his path brought a mutter to young Stede Lance's lips. He'd have to go there. No other escape except to evade the pursuers among the few water holes which he knew might exist along this side of the range.

"I want to get shut o' you!" he snarled at her suddenly, when she had struggled up and demanded at last what he should do. "I killed a man over in the copper country. It was fair enough. But when I got into Pana, Milroy knowed me.

"Him and Cunningham shoved two guns onto me in the dinin' room. Then them hounds swore they'd stretch me in the street. Milroy was takin' me back way to the depot when I laid him out—with the cuff."

"Ted Milroy!" she gasped. "I—know him. I'm the new schoolteacher at Purvis. And Sheriff Milroy—did you kill him?"

Stede Lance laughed surlily. "Might as well! And you—me cuffed to a woman out here on a getaway! To the Panamint—"

Her gray eyes narrowed tensely on him. "I know you. I read about you. Stede Lance! And Milroy—he'll get you!"

"If he's man enough. No man ever put cuffs on me before." His tired young face grinned as he swung to the left trail down. The girl stared at the steel cuff which bound her own brown wrist to his. Then at him defiantly.

"Did anybody know you was out ridin' tonight?" grunted Stede.

"No. I'd unsaddle back at my boarding house and go to bed. No one would miss me until school time tomorrow."

"They won't guess either that you met up with me. They won't guess at once I got a horse and crossed the ridge. They'll search first down Dry Creek and over to Ringman's. Won't think I headed right for the Panamint—no water, no grub. Give me eight hours, and then they'll turn back over the ridge. Eight hours——"

"What are you going to do?" the girl cried. "Milroy will be on your track. He—" She stopped, staring up at his brown, lean cheek. Lance had turned his horse down a slope of rocky fragments past giant boulders until they were on a shelf of black shadow with the gray leprous sinks of the moonlit valley stretching below.

"Milroy's girl," Lance grunted. "I heard that—schoolteacher—and it's you?" He laughed again, briefly.

A moment ago he had been studying this business. The girl was a clew if she got back to Pana Springs. If he were free of her, free to ride on in the desperate chance of living through the devil sink beyond tomorrow, still she could betray him—if she lived.

If he could smash this cuff from her arm and go on, she never would get back across the desert ridge alone. And Stede Lance could live it out, he thought. Just a chance, across the livid sinks, on the water holes he knew not being dried—but back the other way no chance against the swing off at a rope's end.

So he rode dully on down the last rim of rock, out over a cactus-grown slope to where the first dry watercourses straggled away between sand drifts to the lower levels. Out across the dead glister of the alkali flats into a low gully and around a last black outcrop of rock. Then he stopped the horse, staring down.

"Now, we swing off here. You be quiet. I'll swing you down without hurtin' your arm. Is the cuff cuttin' you?"

"Not much. Lance, what are you going to do?"

"Goin' to get shut o' you someways. Goin' to—did it hurt?"

"No," she answered. But it had. The steel had cut her wrist when he swung her and himself from the saddle. He watched her cunningly.

"Now, we back that animal into the arroyo. From the ridge

yonder even by day they couldn't see nothin' out here. I come so we left no trail on them rocks. They'd foller marks to the slope and then keep on down leftways where a fellow might strike water. I figgered what they'd do. They'll make one look around and won't linger."

They had to trudge awkwardly, his right hand shackled to her right. She kept before him, and he went with his arm extended.

"Milroy'll come this way. They'll miss me tomorrow. And the horse. They'll know, then. A missing horse, and you—escaped."

"Sure. But by tomorrow—come on." He made her stop in the shadow of the rock. There was a hollow in the drifted sand below it, and he was staring at this now. Then he dragged his cuffed hand before his eyes, with her own beside his.

"That lock bar slipped tight on you. I thought I might slip it off, but it can't be done." He was studying again, coldly.

This girl meant death to him unless he got rid of her. He could choke the life from her and then crush her hand through the steel band. Only another life, and it gave him the desert's chance for his own then. Tomorrow, the killing sun high over the gray shimmering sinks, with no water; and the stolen horse could not bear him across the Panamint. Not even alone.

"Kneel down," he ordered roughly. "Let me think. No stone out here is any good hammerin' them links. Then the noise—they might have follered to the ridge by now—just maybe. Milroy—"

"Milroy will kill you!" she seethed at him. "For this!"

"Hell—yes! For nothin' at all, ma'am. That ain't worryin' me none. I aim to get shut o' you, and then start my worryin' about the deputies. First, free, ma'am, and—"

She knelt in the sand, her wrist across his knee as he watched her set face and then the steel links between the bracelets.

"I brought you here to free you, if it can be. This gun o' Cunningham's has three shots in it. A forty-five, ma'am. Now, mebbe—"

"You mean—shoot it off?"

"Try to. In the rock cleft"—he rubbed his dry lips—"in the sand under there so's to muffle the shot. I don't aim to be took by 'em over there."

"Suppose they don't follow this way? Suppose I am free? You'd take the horse and go—leave me here in the desert?"

"Come!" he grunted doggedly. "You see how it is. What in hell can I do? If I don't shoot that cuff off it's me and you in the sun tomorrow with an animal sinkin' under us. You see?"

"Shoot," she muttered, and tried to drag away from him. He was touching her hand gently across his knee, then looking at her wrathful eyes upon him.

"Milroy—wonder what he'd think if he knowed. He's a good man—I ain't aimin' to say he ain't a good fightin' follerin' fool. He'd drop me without a chance—if he knowed."

"You get me free!" the girl cried. "I'm not afraid of you!"

The space between the cleft in the black outcrop thrust up above the desert floor was not four feet wide. Into this he drew his body, lying outstretched, and began to dig the sand away, working with his left hand while she crouched beyond him. Once she made a swift reach for his gun, and then stopped. Lance laughed in his tired, grim manner. Then laid the gun before her.

"Take it—if you want. What good'd it do you? Shackled to a dead man's worse'n a live one out here. Now, I got to shoot—mebbe tear the hand off one o' us. It's close. Got to shoot with my left hand two inches from your arm. You scared?"

"Go on. I'm not afraid. I want to get away. Ted Milroy—the sheriff—you shoot that link. I'm not scared."

"No use to be scared. I can't fix it so's I know you won't get hurt. But your hand—so little. And soft. Bend it back at the wrist. Way back. I'll crush my hat between and heap the sand over it. Now wait—"

She could not see what he was doing. Side by side they lay outstretched in this black shadow, their arms thrust under the rock. But he was burying her arm in sand to her shoulder, and twisting her hand deep in it. Then slowly he crawled over, got the bulk of his body across her arm so that he was a living barrier between her and the rock, her manacled hand just protruding.

But this brought the firing point close to his face. He could not arrange so that the flash of that gun would be elsewhere but under his chin as he held the weapon in his left hand drawn close

to his breast. He had to shoot carefully at a link of steel that hung between his own wrist and the hat bedded in the sand which protected her all that might be.

But she could see nothing, feel nothing but the weight of his body crushed over her shoulder grinding her to the sand. It was no use to think, to suggest or protest. She was captive to this man and he was fighting to escape from her and be gone as well.

"Now wait. I don't reckon it'll hurt you."

"How about you? Can't you fix it so you won't—"

Then she was dumb before the roar and the crash of light in that narrow space. She felt his body jerk, and then she was gasping in the black powdersmoke that swept past his shoulders.

Something had snatched cruelly at her wrist. The steel cut deep under the impact of a blow. But she felt him relax from his tension.

"We got to try it again. It's hard to center a gun on a spinnin' bit o' chain in this light. It's plum' hell, ma'am—to shoot this way. No room to get a sight, so close up, you see."

Then he coughed and mumbled. "Did the jerk hurt you?"

"Not much. I felt it." Then she winced back under his weight. "What is that? Running on my wrist—in the sand. Blood?"

"It come back on me. In my hand kind o'. Glanced. I hit the pin link by my cuff, you see. I was aimin' to snap it there."

"You're hurt! Your hand—I feel the blood dripping—"

She knew the sand was wet and warm, packed above her arm.

"Wait," he murmured. "There's only three shots in this gun, I see. I dunno—wait, ma'am."

And the girl tensed, staring at the shoulder of his shattered arm which laid over her chest as he crouched with his back to her. She was beginning to ask again of him when the second shot came. It blinded and deafened her even behind the protecting barrier of his body. But she knew, in the acrid smoke, that his neck had snapped back and he had slumped limply across her.

"Lance?" She struggled furiously out of the burrow. Free. She crawled back, gasping, to the air. In the moonlight she raised her arm. The steel cuff was still about it, but the last link had been gouged out where it had joined his.

She stood up staring at the glitter in the moonlight. Blood and sand smeared to her elbow! Then she ran back and knelt.

"Lance! What's the matter?"

He lay quietly in the shadow of the rock. She got an arm under his head and dragged his body to the clear. Rolled him over and stared at his open mouth and closed eyes.

He was blacked and burned from chin to hair roots by the powder. A widening wreath of crimson swept from his temple. And his right hand, which she held up, was broken and twisted. She dragged him another yard to lay him down, face up to the moonlight.

"Lance? Are you killed?" she cried in futile wildness and shook his shoulder. The bullets had both struck him, then? The second, sheering the last groove of the link, had glanced back from the rock and torn a furrow from his brow past the ear. She saw the line of it in his thick curly hair.

The girl tore the sleeve from her khaki shirt and began to wipe the stuff from his face. She ran out to the horse upon whose saddle hung the little canteen which she was wont to carry on her rides about Pana Springs. Then she came back, staring at it.

He might be dead. Water—and she was miles in the leprous sink of the Panamint, and that dawn which is death was coming. Water—a pint of it, warm, wretched—but it would save him. And youth has no will to die. She found herself thinking very coolly about this affair.

"I ought to be able to get back. Find his trail and get to the foothills. Then up—before daylight, I could make it. He—if he comes to, he'll take the horse. Then I—couldn't. I—I wish I knew what was in his mind—about me. He—he's stirring."

Yes, Lance was moving in the sand. When she knelt by him his lips moved. Then he drifted to senselessness again.

She wet the cloth and touched his brow. No, she mustn't do that. Water was so precious—tomorrow coming. She lifted the canteen to his lips. She gave him very little, then laid his head down. The blood from his shattered hand was glistening in the moonlight. Widening, making a pool in a cup of the dry rock.

She saw his lips twist in a sigh. Then he was still again. His face

blacked and burned and blood streaked. Well, if he had choked the tiny breath from her he could have freed himself of her easily and been miles on the way to that water hole he knew of!

The girl had left him and gone to the horse. She backed the animal out of the rocks, and stood with the reins in her hands. Free, now. She could laugh at the valley of death from the high divide when the blast of the yellow sun smote it!

Ride back and tell them. Lance the killer, stunned and crippled in the first dry sink off the Panamint trail. For a schoolteacher, not a year out from Wellesley, this was something to do. A triumph. The men of Pana would not think an Eastern girl would face things like this. The West?—well, where did the West get its blood save from the East that sent them forth?

This was triumph, standing clam-eyed against this young killer whom men feared. Not flinching, not fearing him. She could go and tell them, and they could bring him in to hang when he was able to face the drop.

She swung the reins over the horse's ears. By daylight she could make it across the divide. So she took the last look at him, silent, inert, in the splotch of moonlight between the two black rock pinnacles. Suppose the deputies found but a dead man?

So she went back again to him. The pool of blood was wider on the desert stone. There was so little one could do.

But she raised his head again.

"Lance? I'm going. I've got to. But, isn't there something? You—might not be alive tomorrow—when they come to get you—"

The steel cuff on her wrist was against his cheek. His head sank wearily in the curve of her arm. Then his lips were moving. Plainly he did not know where his head rested, nor what he was saying.

That last bullet, smashing the link, had ricocheted on the rock wall and come back on him twice. Torn that gash across his skull and then into his body by the collar bone. He began to cough as he lay now with his head on her lap.

"Go," he began to whisper wearily. "Right soon, you. Sunup,

and you're done for—never make it in the heat. The horse—it can travel before sunup—back."

"I can't take you, Lance," she muttered.

"Reckon not. What for? I never aimed to leave you here. Aimed to shoot you free and give you the animal—don't you see?"

"You did? You meant that? Why?"

"Your hand. It was so soft and little. I could have torn the arm off you last night and got away. Only, then, if I got away, I'd have to think o' you some time. I had to kill you last night or shoot you free o' me and send you home. Milroy'll tell you I'm a killin' dog. I didn't, did I?"

She had to listen with her ears close to his lips. She didn't think he knew what he was talking about as he whispered on.

"First damn lady I ever knowed anywheres, and she gets hooked to me. But I showed her the trail home."

She couldn't hear much more from him after she pressed the last water to his lips. But she sat an hour while he whispered on inarticulately. Only the burden of it was that she must be free, and she must be back out of this sink of death before the sun.

After a while the girl stood up and watched the stars and the moon sinking behind the far black ranges. So that was it? He would not have left her to face the white dazzling wastes alone tomorrow? Well, she couldn't leave him then, whatever came.

She ran behind the rocks to look for the horse. If she could get Lance to the saddle perhaps she could make back up over the ridge to Pana Springs before the deadly sun cut off escape. But then, what was there for him? Who would believe he had played fair with her? But she led the tired animal out before the rock, and was studying how to get his body nearer when she heard a voice beyond this shelter.

It came very clear and sharp in the desert silence. So she called and then fled out that way into the open, staring off.

The flash of metal in the moonlight first showed, and then a mounted figure at the edge of a gray sink beyond. She heard this newcomer gasp in astonishment before she had reached half the distance.

"Ted Milroy! Oh, come!"

The sheriff lowered his gun bewilderedly.

"Nellie, is that you? How—What's this? I trailed over here alone from the top of the ridge. Stede Lance came this way—"

"Oh, Ted—come *this* way! Around by the rock. You alone?"

"Yes. I sent the rest of 'em along the foothills. You—it was your horse he got? I kinda thought so. I was scared when I found you was missin'. And I found the trail."

"Stede Lance is there. Come on." She lifted the broken cuff on her arm, and then pointed. Sheriff Milroy felt of a bloody welt on his brow as she swiftly told him of the night's doings.

Then he came to where she knelt with Lance's head on her knee again. Milroy put a hand out to the fugitive's brow slowly.

"Nellie, this man's gone. Ain't no use for us—"

"I know. He sent me back to you, and he went—out. Oh, Ted—I wish we could do something!"

"Do something? Stede Lance is gone. He wasn't no crook. I'll say that. A devilin' boy who got started wrong from shootin' too free. Maybe if Stede'd had an even break he'd come clean—"

Sheriff Ted Milroy had unlocked the broken cuff from Nellie Archer's bruised wrist. Then she pointed at the limp figure by the rock, and Sheriff Ted unlocked its mate from Stede Lance's arm.

The desert dawn was beginning to show in faint splashes of pink and pearl beyond the serrated black hills, and the last stars were silver studs in a pale sky.

"I tell you what I want," said the girl, staring up at Milroy. "Let's bury him there. Under the rock. In that clean sand. And then go away and never tell them.

"Why should we? Here is where he was fine at last. With a smile, Ted! People can believe that he did escape—across the border. It would be a secret for us to share."

The big sheriff put his arm about the girl and drew her away by the rock. Then he went to working in the dry clean sand under the ledge which would be drifted deeper in the next storm across the Panamint.

They rode out of the sink and to the top of the divide before

the rest of Milroy's posse came in from a search along the foothills. The deputies wondered, but they thought the sheriff's girl must have followed out from town. They didn't know about the two broken steel cuffs hidden in her riding shirt.

The sheriff keeps them today in his home desk, and sometimes his wife leans over his shoulder and they smile at the bullet-marked fetters. Then Milroy smiles up at her.

"The only damn lady that Stede ever knowed, he told you, didn't he, Nellie? Well, I wish we could have knowed him better."

The Parson Of Oxbow Bend

by ROY W. HINDS

They called him "The Parson" and the "Preachin' State-O-Mainer", but he was tough and square, even if he did hurl bible verses at everyone in general. Then came the question of whether this outsider would be accepted as a boss. And even tougher, the question of how well he could handle subtle sabotage.

THE PERSON WHO ORDERS gin at a bar or a restaurant these days has no idea that his drink is a lineal descendant of the "tamarack" which the lumberjacks of Michigan drank with great gusto and bone-crushing results, back in 1895. Barring a squirt of juniper juice and a dash of glycerine, this is the same concoction that the Saginaw lumberjack lifted above his plaid Mackinaw jacket.

The lumberjack paid a dollar a quart, and didn't have to worry about tips, or how much a false bottom his glass contained—if he used one. One drank his tamarack and went looking for trouble, which he usually found in the shape of flying fists.

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Ambrose Sparkes, boss of the Sias logging camp on the Chippewa River, lay in his bunk and thought of two things—rheumatism and tamarack. He couldn't very well help thinking of the rheumatism, which has a way of reminding a man of its presence in no uncertain terms.

In the crude, unlettered mind of Ambrose Sparkes there was only one sure cure for all ills. And why not? Tamarack had cured his colds and his stomach aches, or at least he thought it had, and it certainly had for the moment cured numerous fits of melancholy. Well, why shouldn't it cure rheumatism?

But to a certain incident of the day must be attributed the mental nudge in respect to the tamarack. Ambrose hadn't, so to speak, thought it up right out of his head. During the late afternoon he had chased a tamarack runner into the woods when he found him dickering with some of his men on the edges of the timber fall.

Ambrose, a conscientious boss and heretofore a stickler for the rule against drinking in camp, had always done that with tamarack runners. They were pests, and the introduction of their stuff into a camp demoralized discipline.

But now, suffering from melancholy and the twinges of rheumatism, Ambrose wished he had some of the stuff. The nearest saloon was sixteen miles down the river, and snow lay heavily on the earth. His mind kept going back to the tamarack runner, who, he remembered, was a half-breed Indian, Charley Sheeptail—so called because he was short and abbreviated—notorious as a tamarack peddler and timber thief.

Ambrose wondered if Charley Sheeptail were still about. He knew the persistency of Charley Sheeptail. Perhaps he had lingered in the woods until nightfall, spiriting word into camp that he was ready for business.

The cook would know. The cook, who slept in a den back of the cook shack, was a tamarack addict, and he had been heavily tamaracked for a day or two. There were numerous places around the timber fall—hollows, rock clusters—in which a liquor peddler could set up shop and to which the lumberjacks could sneak with their surreptitious patronage. There were in fact four

or five men missing from the main bunk house at that very moment—and the boss had his suspicions.

There were in every camp a number of sober, saving men, and the drinkers and spenders managed to borrow from them against the spring pay day. The tamarack runners thrived in winter, when the lumberjacks were far from the saloons. They traveled with a horse and democrat wagon or sled, for big profits lay in big supplies.

Ambrose took a look around. Most of the thirty men who occupied that bunk house were already in their bunks, some snoring, some reading newspapers considerably aged. There was a game of seven-up in progress at the table, attended by muttered quarreling and invective. It was all extremely commonplace, even to "Parson" Elizur Flake, who sat in a far corner reading his Bible.

Parson Elizur Flake was a muscular, square-shouldered, bearded lumberjack known in the region as the "Preachin' State-o'-Mainer." He had come to those Michigan woods from Maine some four or five years previously.

He was a religious man of extraordinarily firm convictions, and inclined to rant in an earnest, friendly way. He prayed in the main bunkhouse night and morning, and sometimes went to the other bunkhouses to lift up his voice. He invoked a blessing at all meals, in nowise deterred by the singular indifference of woodsmen whose devotion at the moment was centered on beans and bread and black-strap molasses. He had been known to fall on his knees in the snow, while cutting timber, and send out among the pines fervent warnings of the wrath to come.

The Parson—which was a nickname—had worked in numerous camps in that region. He went about all his tasks with a holy zeal, and was the most capable and industrious logger in the Sias camp. He was good at anything—sawing, chopping, trimming, top loading, skidding, and driving.

The novelty of his religious manifestations had worn off. The camp no longer hooted and made sport of him, though an occasional boot was still tossed his way. The lumberjacks played cards—seven-up and tunk and pedro—and indulged in their

carefree speech, while Parson Elizur read his Bible, now and then booming out some particularly striking passage. He always prayed aloud, with an eye watchful for chance missiles. He did not resent the gibes and scorn to which he was subjected. He obtained his consolations for these indignities from Holy Writ itself.

The boss pulled on his boots. Parson Elizur, a man of keen perceptions and a friend of Ambrose Sparkes, studied him furtively. He knew the signs. His voice sounded—ominous and sonorous: " 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' "

Ambrose was wroth. He turned a withering glance on Parson Elizur. He knew that Elizur wouldn't carry his objections too far. Elizur was not a talebearer against any man in camp, friend or foe.

The others paid no attention to the bibical allusion. Parson Elizur was always ripping off something like that—with the startling unexpectedness of a cannon shot.

The boss reached for his Mackinaw jacket and cap. Came the voice: " 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.' "

Someone threw something at Elizur, which he dodged. Ambrose slid out of the bunkhouse. Elizur followed, Bible in hand, bareheaded in the winter moonlight.

"Ambrose," he called, with a decently lowered voice. "Remember yer failin's, Ambrose—one drink an' ye lose all. Yer job—"

"Shet yer dam' mouth an' g'on t' bed!" Ambrose rasped. "Whyn't ye blab t' the hull camp—"

Parson Elizur voiced his reassurance by again falling back on the Scriptures: " 'Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon.' But I warn ye, Ambrose—yer job—"

But Ambrose was gone. Parson Elizur went sorrowfully back into the bunkhouse.

And Parson Elizur knew whereof he spoke when he warned, "One drink, an' ye lose all." Ambrose Sparkes was that kind of a drinking man.

By morning the camp was in an uproar, the boss and several

men drunk and fighting—and Parson Elizur Flake preaching against the iniquities of drink with extraordinary warmth and with all the effect of an attack on Gibraltar with sling shots. Work was demoralized, and Charley Sheeptail did business openly in the cook shack, and grinned triumphantly upon Elizur.

The result of this was a report of the circumstances to Sam Sias, at Midland, by the grub driver. Sam Sias came to camp. He and his Brother John operated the camp.

"Ambrose," said Sam Sias, "if you didn't look so all-fired tuckered out, I'd belt you in the nose." He was six foot two and broad and rugged. He added: "Think you can stand a ride to Midland in the grub wagon?"

Ambrose groaned. Sam Sias took the groan for an affirmative.

"All right," he pursued. "You got wages coming. Wind up your jag in town—guzzle till you can't lift your head. Then rest, and get the rheumatiz limbered up. If you live, I'll fix up a job for you in the mills, where I can keep my eye on you."

After Ambrose had gone Sam Sias spent two days at the camp. There were ninety-six lumberjacks in the camp, and every one wondered who would get Ambrose Sparkes' job. The end of the winter's cut was nearing, and whoever was chosen no doubt would be put at the top of the camp the next winter. The job was worth while. In the end Sam Sias gave the camp a resounding surprise, not to say a shock.

He named Parson Elizur Flake camp boss. Elizur wasn't disliked—in fact almost every one had a tolerant liking for him—but it seemed a strange idea. Camp bosses were usually fighting and, to some extent, drinking men—men after the hearts of those they essayed to boss.

Elizur certainly was not a drinking man. None knew whether he could fight. He understood the business of logging, however, in the woods and on the rivers. It was a shock, yet none was rankled— except Pete Cherry and a few of his cronies.

Pete didn't like Elizur, and Pete thought he should have had the job himself.

"Must be a joke," someone said.

"Hurraw!" cried another, studying the scowling visage of Pete Cherry. "Now there'll be trouble."

And there was.

Three weeks had elapsed since Sam Sias departed. It was along in March. The earth was getting soggy. The snow, except for a few dirty splashes here and there, was gone—and log sledding was a difficult job. There were standing pines in the timber fall however, and these must be brought down and trimmed into logs before the drive was started down the river.

The ice had gone out, the high waters of the Chippewa had fallen within their banks. The river was ready for the drive and great piles of logs were heaped along the summit of the rollaway. The mills at Midland and Saginaw were clamoring for logs. Other drives, from the river above had passed the Sias camp. Drivesmen roared up to the men still cutting timber that they'd soon be face-to-face with the bartenders down the river.

Elizur Flake, the new boss, pushed his men along in the work of cleaning up the timber fall. He exhorted them frequently on the reward of industry as set forth in the Scriptures.

Every man was needed on the job. Bonuses were offered for every workday of unusual results. This was the time chosen for his strike by the disgruntled Pete Cherry. It was only a one-man strike, but if it were successful none could say how it would end.

It was dawn. Elizur's bunk was near the door, with none above. The other bunks were in tiers. There was the commotion of twenty-nine lumberjacks dressing—chattering, growling, pushing, hauling on their felts and sloshes, the usual footgear at that damp season—buckled rubbers, thick-soled, with felt legs extending halfway to the knees. Parson Elizur had finished his morning prayer.

There were thirty men in that bunk house but only twenty-nine were engaged in the operation of dressing. The thirtieth, Pete Cherry, lay in his bunk—pretending to be asleep but with an eye partly open, waiting for some one to start something.

The camp boss stepped close to Pete's bunk. "What ails ye, brother," he inquired. "Sick?"

Pete opened both eyes and raised up a trifle by clasping his hands underneath his head. Elizur snapped his suspenders up over his heavy shoulders and waited patiently for an answer.

"No-o-o," Pete drawled finally, "I ain't ezac'ly sick. Guess I'm jus' kind o' doggy."

Talk stopped. Tense expectancy filled the air. This had been brewing three weeks.

Parson Elizur hesitated a few moments, and then sat down on his own bunk. He finished dressing, pulling on his felts and sloshes. He went outside, and proceeded thoughtfully toward the cook shack and breakfast.

Spring had come into the air in earnest. The raw chill had vanished during the night. The morning was balmy, with a sweet breeze from the pines and hemlocks.

Daylight broadened softly, and the sun had found the camp and the forest when Elizur Flake finished breakfast and emerged from the cook shack. In one hand he held a dipper of hot coffee. He drew a deep breath. "Oh, Lord," he murmured, "I hate t' whip a man a fine mornin' like this!"

He returned to the bunk house. Pete Cherry was asleep again, a half grin of victory on his shaggy face. There had probably been disparaging talk about the boss after he left and before the others went to breakfast. The two men were alone now. Elizur shook the sleeper.

"Here, brother," he said, "drink this coffee. It'll liven ye up."

Pete sat up. He scowled, and rubbed his tousled head.

"Ye said ye wa'n't sick," the camp boss continued, "only doggy. Well, I want t' brighten ye up."

Pete took the dipper and peered into it.

"Drink it, brother," Elizur urged; "an' then put yer feet out on the floor."

Cherry looked ugly. He drank the coffee, and watched the boss narrowly. Then he swung his feet out.

"Feel better?" Elizur inquired.

"I feel awright," Pete growled.

"Work t'-day?"

"Don't b'lieve I will." Pete yawned placidly. "No—don't b'lieve I will."

"Git yer clo'es on—yer sloshes. Don't like t' tramp on yer feet."

Pete Cherry brightened. "Fight?" he asked.

"Yup. Ye forced me t' it, brother—an' may the Lord gi' me power t' show ye the error of yer ways. It's fer yer own eternal sal—"

"Dry up 'n the preachin'," Pete growled. "I'll be ready 'n a minit."

They prepared for the encounter quite calmly. Elizur removed his cap and Mackinaw jacket. Pete partly dressed. Elizur bolted the door and moved the table and a few chairs out of the way. They faced each other in their shirt sleeves.

They were about evenly matched in age and size—neither yet at middle age—but Pete Cherry had the advantage of long experience in rough-and-tumble fighting, in camps and in the saloons along the rivers. Pete was a trifle heavier, and perhaps a little stronger, but he lacked the spring and agility of his antagonist.

Pete Cherry was a rushing slugger, and he began his rushing and slugging at once. They had considerable space to fight in. Elizur darted free of the first rush, gliding out of range as Pete slugged with his right and then his left. He whipped a smash to Pete's nose as the latter found himself slightly off balance from the blows that failed to land.

Pete howled with pain and rage. He was knocked back but not down. Hot tears blinded his eyes, and a red smear grew on his face. He hunched his shoulders and bored in.

Faces were framed in the two windows. There was considerable hauling and pushing outside as lumberjacks struggled for a view of the encounter.

They were fighting furiously now, Parson Elizur endeavoring to keep out of the corners. He was knocked flat, but in those moments of dim sensibility he managed to slide out from under as Pete sought to spring upon him. Elizur came onto his feet again, back against the wall. His head cleared.

He ducked, struck out—and landed a clean, ringing blow against Pete's chin. Pete lurched, sagged, and clattered across the room, falling against a tier of bunks. Elizur leaped after him—and was knocked back.

They met again in the center of the floor, and fought like madmen, all over the place—standing, crouching, banging against the chairs and table, leaning against the walls, falling on the floor, again standing upright. Their shirts hung in ribbons.

A fight started outside, over standing room at a window.

Pete Cherry seized a mop of Elizur's hair in one huge paw, and struck fiercely with his other fist. Elizur jerked his head down, ducking the blow—then he wriggled into position and shot in a swift uppercut. It caught Pete on the chin, underneath, and snapped his head back.

Elizur struck again. The fingers holding his hair relaxed. Pete slumped to the floor—out.

Parson Elizur leaned against the wall, breathing heavily. His shaking legs carried him to a chair, and he sank down. He watched Pete Cherry, and gasped: "Fer yer own salvation, brother—that's why I done it."

There was no more fight in Pete Cherry. He worked that day.

That evening, after supper, there was a guarded conference in the woods between Pete Cherry and one of his cronies.

"Don't b'lieve ye c'n lick that Preachin' State-o'-Mainer, Pete," the man said. "He 'peared t' be too spry fer ye. Must 'a' done a sight o' fightin' 'n his day—back 'n Maine, afore he went an' got religion.

"Yes, siree, he's too spry fer ye. An' say, I bet there ain't a man 'n this camp that'll want t' buck him now. He made friends t'-day, Pete. Wouldn't try it ag'in, 'f I's you—not right off."

"I c'n lick 'm," Pete grumbled. "He ain't gonta land n' more chance blows— nex' time we tie up. But," he added with thoughtful deliberation, "Jus' now I'm thinkin' o' doin' more'n lickin' him."

"Whut's 'at ye say, Pete?" his companion demanded in some alarm. "Git holt o' yerself, Pete—"

"I'm thinkin' o' Oxbow Bend—an' the drive," Pete explained. "See whut I mean?"

"Oh—yeh, I see," came the rejoinder, with evident relief. "Hang the drive up, eh?"

"Anything Sam Sias hates is one o' his drives t' git hung up," Pete suggested. "'Speshly when a camp's late 'n rollin' the cut down t' the water. He's fired more'n one boss fer hangin' a drive up—an' this'll be a big un. More'n a mile long, I bet. Look 't the timber fall we cut over this winter. Now"—pointedly—"if there was some deadheads sunk round the Oxbow—"

They conferred earnestly.

"But there's other drives goin' down the river now," Pete Cherry pointed out. "Don't want t' hang *them* up. Thing t' do is wait till the last minit, then sink some deadheads round the Oxbow—jus' afore this drive comes along there.

"Hang it up so's they'll haf t' dynamite. That'll blow the deadheads t' pieces—see whut I mean?"

"Yeh, I see. That's it, Pete—best way t' git back at 'm. Git 'm fired. Ye'll maybe git the job nex' winter, if ye do good work 't gittin' the drive free.

"I'm s'prised Sam Sias didn't give ye the job when he sent Ambrose Sparkes back t' town, but—well, ye got t' be nice, Pete, an' not start nuthin' else, if ye want t' keep right with Sam Sias."

"I ain't a fool," Pete Cherry rejoined. His battered face appeared hideous in the moonlight as he essayed a grin. "An' I'll be nose boss o' the drive," he added. "See whut I mean? Nose boss—like I alluz be'n."

2

Oh, I'm so sick, but I'll soon mend
If we c'n float by Oxbow Bend,
  Fer there's a great big warm saloon in Sag-ee-naw!

That fat bartender, he's lookin' fer us,
But Oxbow Bend does make me cuss,
  Fer it keeps me away from my likker in Sag-ee-naw!

That bend is sharp an' it's full o' sand,
If we pile up then I'll be damned
If I ever once ag'in leave dear old Sag-ee-naw!

From the ditties of the old Michigan lumberjacks.

Four men came aboard the big Sias drive at the river town of Floyd. All were filled with business of an important nature. The slow-moving pine logs, dripping, smelling fragrantly of pitch, stretched nearly a mile along the river. On either flank of the drive there was no more than three feet of open water.

One of the visitors stepped aboard at the center of the drive and went directly to the drive house, a rudely built shack on a raft wedged among the floating logs. His business was with Elizur Flake, foreman.

There was a short discussion, followed by an order or two. They talked privately, yet there was no effort at concealment. This man went ashore again, mounted his horse, and rode out on the road to Midland, along the north side of the river.

The other visitors boarded the drive at its head, nearly a half mile down the river from the drive house and of course out of sight of the foreman at that moment. They transacted their business in undertones with Pete Cherry, nose boss, and appeared to the drivesmen thereabouts as callers of the most casual nature.

They were in fact acquaintances, buddies, for they had worked in the camp. It seemed that they had been tarrying at the town of Floyd, and came on the drive now to call on old friends, of whom Pete Cherry was the closest. This conference came under the eye of Matt Turk, a brawny, cheerful, woodsman, but if Matt had suspicions they were so vague as to pass almost unnoticed even by Matt himself.

Going ashore, these men sought the cover of the forest. They proceeded along the south shore of the river toward Oxbow Bend, full of business and intent. But presently, as is the way of their kind when there seems to be time to spare, they thought of diversions. Presently they wandered away from the river, and found a warm roadside inn with a bar.

Oxbow Bend was the toughest spot along the Chippewa. Every lumberjack and river hog in that region knew the Oxbow, and hated it. The bend, turning sharply at two points, almost loops, was no more than three miles from the mills—saw and gin—of Midland, where the Chippewa flowed into the Tittabawassee. Saginaw, which got most of the logs from those woods, lay below Midland. Lumberjacks, that close to wages and liquor after a winter in the woods, had a grudge against the Oxbow.

It was a tough pull to float a drive around the bend. It was rimmed on one side by a stretch of marshy land; a bayou, and this soggy pool spread the water from the river and lowered its depth at the sharp bows. The logs stuck and clogged—wedged in, and remained fast.

The drivesmen sunk their peaveys fiercely into the logs. They ground their boot calks into the bark in impotent rage. They hauled and pried with their pike poles. They cursed Oxbow Bend, but in the end they usually sat down, quiet and exhausted, while the foreman and a few men of especial skill at that sort of thing dynamited the sand reefs and the key logs of the jam.

There was occasionally a foreman who could place his men so skillfully and thin the mass of the drive so that it floated around the bend as easily as it negotiated the deeper and longer curves above. All along those rivers it was regarded as foolhardy to attempt the passage of Oxbow Bend in darkness. It was wiser to fling out the shore sticks, which dangled at the ends of the head boom, dog them to trees, and to lie above the bend until sunrise.

The men on the Sias drive took it for granted that Elizur Flake would do that. The drive cleared the little town of Floyd about five o'clock in the afternoon. It would, if kept running, reach the bend about eight.

Spring darkness came on heavily soon after six. A high wind, cold and spattered with rain, raked the stretches of the drive. Hands gripping peavey handles and pike poles grew stiff and numb, despite mittens and gloves and the frequent flailing of arms. Water churned up between the logs, spouting high at times, and added its soaking chill to the sweep of the wind. A bad night, dark as a pit, and of course none thought of attempting the

passage of the Oxbow before dawn. Pete Cherry, nose boss, assured himself of that.

The nose boss was in charge of operations at the head of the drive, the tail boss had charge of the rear. The foreman himself watched over the work on the flanks, for he spent much of his time around the drive house.

There were forty men all told on the drive. Every man had worked on the cut, and had stuck by the drive for the journey to Midland, while the others had been paid off in camp. It did not require the full camp force to run the drive.

Volunteers, drawn by the river bonus, which was large compared with camp wages, offered to stick. The others took short cuts through the woods to the various towns—all except three, friends of Pete Cherry, who lingered along the river, drinking, and fishing for deadheads.

Pete grew surlier than ever as darkness fell. He also grew nervous, and looked back often in the direction of the drive house.

The ends of two logs came together with a thud under Pete's feet. A spurt of water smacked him in the face. Pete tore at his whiskers with a mittened hand, squeezing the water out of them. He cursed the wind and the cold water, the logs and, finally, the foreman.

"Whut's he waitin' fer?" he growled. "Whyn't he tell us t' tie them sticks up?"

Matt Turk, working near by, thought the same thing. Matt knew the river. In a very few minutes now the heavily wooded shores would be passed. It would be hard to dog the shore sticks, and thus fetch the head boom and drive to a stop, if there were no large trees.

"Maybe," Matt Turk suggested, "he's forgot there ain't no big trees b'low here. Whyn't ye go back an' tell him, Pete?"

Pete was meditating on this suggestion when the foreman himself appeared out of the gloom.

Parson Elizur Flake and Pete Cherry were outwardly on good terms. Pete, for reasons of his own, had worked faithfully and industriously after their fight. At the break-up for the last three

or four years he had been named nose boss of the drive. He was a skillful man in that post. Elizur Flake had so named him this spring, with characteristic generosity and forgetfulness of their trouble.

Elizur now stepped close to the nose boss. He rode the tightly packed logs easily, assured on his calk soles. Pete Cherry did likewise. They presented a heroic picture in the darkness, leaning jauntily against the wind on their precarious footing—strong, rugged men to whom churning logs presented no terrors. Matt Turk looked on, and overheard.

"Pete," said Elizur, "we'll run the Oxbow t'-night."

"Oxbow!" the nose boss roared. "T'-night!"

"Yup. Drive won't stop at Midland, 'cep't' drop a batch o' logs off'm the tail. We'll take her t' S ag'naw. Sam Sias wants t' hit the high market at Sag'naw—git there fast's we can."

Pete Cherry, thinking of other things, speared a log with his pike pole. The pike pole stuck there, quivering. "Ye don't know that damn bend!" he shouted.

"No call t' yell Pete. Wind ain't s' strong's all that. I know the Oxbow—floated many a log round that bend. I'll put two extra men on the nose here with ye. Ye'll make it all right, Pete—good driver like you."

Pete ignored the compliment. He was incensed, yet he must hold onto himself. A great fear possessed him—fear that the Preachin' State-o'-Mainer was skillful enough to get the drive past the Oxbow at night.

"It ain't right!" Pete cried, in baffled rage. "Ye'll git us fellers tied up, an' no tellin' when we'll git loose. Ev'ry man 'n the drive's bustin' fer town—'tain't right t' hang us up, maybe two-three days, dynamitin' an' all—"

"I got reasons," Parson Elizur cut in quietly. "Reasons, Pete. Sam Sias come aboard at Floyd—an' told me t' git the drive t' Sag'naw fast's I can. That's enuff, ain't it? Big wages fer the men— ev'ry man that stays by t' Sag'naw."

"Wages don't count—now," the nose boss persisted. "It's town we want. Ye can't pass the Oxbow t'-night. We'll hang up there maybe a week.

"Ye got a raft o' heavy sticks—most a mile long. They'll jam, I tell ye—an' jam hard, full len'th maybe, once they start t' pile."

"Not if they're handled right."

Now if Pete had really believed what he said his heart would have overflowed with delight. But the confident assurance of Elizur Flake, his known capabilities, spelled defeat of Pete Cherry's cherished scheme.

Elizur was saying: "Tell yer men t' start thinnin' right now. I'll spread word back t' the tail. We got an hour or more yet. Tell yer men, Pete." He added gravely: " 'Whatsoever thy hand find to do, do it with thy might." '

Pete Cherry was muttering curses when the foreman turned away. "I'll do it with a might!" he told himself.

Yet he seized his pike pole and obeyed orders.

"Now I wonder whut's eatin' Pete," Matt Turk reflected. "He's mighty put out, an' there ain't a man here that ain't willin' t' take a crack at the Oxbow, sake o' maybe gittin' t' town quicker. Sumpin' funny 'bout Pete an' the way he's actin'—an' them sneak faces 'at come on the drive in Floyd—"

The men on the nose and along the flanks were already thinning the drive for the grueling passage of Oxbow Bend. They yelled with delight. The operation, if successful, meant wages and liquor in the morning, as they saw it. The lumberjack is a willing gambler, with his money or his time.

Matt Turk cried: "Le's take 'em round, boys! A mile o' wet logs, but we'll float 'em by like a box o' matches!"

And they burst into song—all except Pete Cherry. The ditty celebrating a corpulent bartender and a Saginaw saloon of cheerful atmosphere and comfortable dimensions rang along the whole length of the drive.

The wind had attained a roaring velocity when the head of the drive came to Oxbow Bend. The head boom and the logs against it, caught in the swifter current, swung sharply.

Elizur Flake, Pete Cherry, Matt Turk and two others rode the boom, steadying themselves by putting one foot on a log. Their task was to drive the boom over the sand reefs which lay thickly

under the water—to keep everything moving. One log caught meant that the weight of the drive behind would jam it farther into the sand, and others with it.

The river just above was a deadly spot. A drive with its nose jammed at the bow developed a multitude of jams—an almost hopeless tangle. Delay—costly delay—for the owners of the drive; hard work for the men, the full crew, day and night; dynamite, and, for Elizur Flake, perhaps the loss of his job. Sam Sias was a man quick to reward success but one who couldn't brook failure even in hazardous tasks.

Pete Cherry had had it all figured out. Once he had brought on the pile-up, his role was to be that of a rescuer. He would do such good work at breaking the jam that Sam Sias would be forever grateful.

It was difficult for the drivesmen, in the darkness, to spot the stickers readily. They were on their toes every moment.

Pete Cherry, even now, would hang the drive up if he could. He'd chuck the head of a log down in the sand. If it caught just right, the weight of the timber behind would do the rest.

Yet he had to be careful. His companions were darting back and forth, here and there, spinning logs beneath their feet, prodding and pulling them along with their pike poles, dislodging whatever seemed inclined to stick.

Just around the first turn one end of the boom caught and tore loose a dark mass floating in the water and hitched to a tree on shore. The boom pushed this mass along.

"Some feller's raft o' deadheads!" Matt Turk sang out; and it occurred to him at once that that was strange. Deadhead fishers didn't usually start work so early. They waited for the warmer water and the lower water of summer.

Pete Cherry muttered imprecations on the heads of his hirelings. Just as he suspected, thinking they had all night in which to sink the deadheads, they were somewhere off in the woods—drinking, perhaps sleeping, idling along on their way back to the Oxbow, oblivious of the fact that Elizur Flake was taking his drive past the bend at night—and a dark, windy night at that—an unheard-of adventure on the Chippewa.

Elizur performed what was called the standing spin. That is to say, his legs were constantly in motion but he traveled nowhere. Log after log moved under his feet and along down the river, but he remained at that point, the most treacherous of the Oxbow's two loops.

Pete Cherry and others went on with the drive—and as fast as Pete surreptitiously poked the head of a log under water, seeking to clog it, someone poked it along. Pete's operations were wary, but Matt Turk had grown watchful. He was filled with suspicions, but as Pete's veiled efforts were unsuccessful, he said nothing.

Pete Cherry was carried past the Oxbow and into the safe waters beyond, muttering angrily under his breath as everyone around him exulted.

Elizur Flake, whipped by the wind, balancing on the floaters beneath, saw his drive clear that treacherous turn bit by bit. He shouted cheerfully to the laboring drivesmen as they came along. When they sang of the fat bartender and the delightful saloon their tune was often thrown off key by Elizur's roaring a strain of some triumphant hymn.

Elizur resumed his journey down the river on the tail of the drive. Perhaps two hours later, when the wind had died down and the waters of the Chippewa ran clear and smooth around Oxbow Bend, three men, a little the worse for drink, came out of the forest.

They stood there blinking, and presently took another drink. Each stared at the water below a certain tree.

"Jerked loose," one of them said. "Deadheads jerked loose. 'S'ell of a note, ain't it? Wind done that, I bet. What'll we do?"

They continued to blink and stare at the river, up and down. They thought of Pete Cherry's wrath over their having tied the deadheads so insecurely. Pete would trounce each and every one of them. Pete had promised them good pay for this job—he had paid them in part already—and they were to get favored jobs when he became boss of the Sias camp.

"Got till mornin'," one of the prowlers suggested, "with the drive tied up above some'eres. On'y thing t' do's fish more deadheads. Lots o' deadheads top o' the bend."

They had their peaveys hidden in the woods near by, and waist-deep in the water above Oxbow Bend they set to work—fishing and raising deadheads, logs unusually heavier at one end than the other which had dropped out of various drives and sunk, and with which the river bottoms of that region were strewn.

They built a fire on shore, and frequently they gathered around the blaze to have a drink. But their work went fitfully on.

3

During the summer Parson Elizur Flake worked as skid boss in the Sias mill at Midland, having charge of the work or running the logs from the river to the saws above. Pete Cherry worked as a piling boss in the yard where the yellow lumber was stacked.

Elizur got a bath, a haircut and a shave, and went to work the day after the drive arrived. Pete Cherry went from the drive to a saloon, thence to a barber shop and back to the saloon. He went to work after indulging in a spring spree.

But despite his occasional sprees, Pete stood well with the Sias brothers. He was an industrious worker and a capable boss, and he wasn't a heavy and extended drinker, as drinking was reckoned in those days.

He had two or three fights, which he won, and conducted himself in the usual manner of a lumberjack freed from the woods. He reported for work after a couple of weeks of morose and surly drinking, and worked hard all summer. He and Elizur Flake saw little of each other, and they had no trouble.

Pete Cherry saw no more of the roving lumberjacks to whom he had intrusted the task of deadheading the curves at Oxbow Bend. These men discovered, of course, that the drive had passed the Oxbow before they got on the job that night.

They continued their carefree wanderings in a direction which put considerable distance between themselves and Pete. They stood in awe of the heavy-fisted Pete, they felt that they had failed him, and they didn't wish to listen to a demand for return of the money he had paid them. They wandered up to the Big

Tobacco River and, broke again, went to work in some of the mills along that stream. In the fall they went into the woods in Gladwin County, some distance from the scene of their last camp labors.

Along in October, Sam Sias summoned Elizur Flake to his office in the mill yard.

"Elizur," he said, "I give you a whirl at bossing a camp last spring—and you done good work. I had my doubts at first. Y'see, you're kind of an outsider with lumberjacks, and outsiders don't always get the best work out of a camp. But you done fine.

"Guess the men'll work for you, if you do preach and howl at 'em. And you fetched the drive past Oxbow Bend at night—you got it on the market in time to hit the big money. We appreciate that. D'you know, we sold them logs in Saginaw at a high figure, and bought some of 'em back at a profit to ourselves during the summer? Yes, siree, that's what we done.

"Well, guess you can boss a camp again this winter. We got a new lease, up the Tittabawass'—a good live timber fall, and some big sticks. I'll let you boss the cut up there. I'm going up tomorrow, and I'll take you and a few men along. There's a sight of brushing to be done, and some work on the camp buildings, before the freeze sets in."

"All right," said Elizur Flake. "I'm ready any time."

Sam Sias added: "We'll be cutting over on the Chippewa too—the old camp, with a timber fall just west of the cut you finished. Pete Cherry'll be bossing the job up there. Pete's a good man—and you said yourself he done good work getting the drive past the Oxbow that night."

"Ev'ry man on the drive done good work," Elizur told Sam Sias, as he had told him before. "I didn't mention Pete especial. I didn't see but little of him round the bend. I only know that there wa'n't no jam, an' I felt grateful t' ev'ry man."

"Yes—sure. Well," Sam Sias explained with a smile, "that'll split you and Pete up. I heard about you whipping him in camp—and Pete's a man that holds a grudge. Good man and all that—but he does hold a grudge. He's done good work for us, but he's been held back—

"Well, I don't mind saying that there's something about Pete's eyes—the way he looks at a man—that makes me distrust him. I ain't got no reason for it, and I guess it's just a funny notion. And maybe it ain't fair to Pete.

"Anyway, I ain't holding him back no more. I'm making a boss of him. Anyway I need two good bosses this winter, and you and Pete seem to be the best we got. Works out fine—with this new lease; and we're looking for big cuts from both camps.

"And another thing, I want your drive to be the first down the Tittabawass'. I've laid out a pretty big timber fall—but you can do it. Keep the tamarack runners out of camp, and you'll work the fall and get the drive down early. Remember, Elizur, and think about it every day. Your drive must be the first down the Tittabawass'—right after high water. Timber'll bring big money early in the spring—if I don't miss my guess. Yes, siree—and we'll catch the market when she's high."

"We'll be the first down," Parson Elizur promised.

This rather commonplace situation was destined to develop into a drama of the woods before the ice went out of the Chippewa and Tittabawassee Rivers in the spring. About the middle of February, Sam Sias visited the Tittabawassee camp, on a Sunday morning. He left about noon.

Whereupon Elizur Flake gathered the ninety lumberjacks into the cook shack.

"Wonder if he's gonta preach?" some one speculated. "Now I ain't gonta stand hitched an' listen t' no preachin' sermons."

"Aint ye alluz hearin' sermons from him?"

"Well, not reg'lar sermons. His prayin' an' askin' blessin's don't hurt us none—as it don't take up our time. But if he's figgerin' on holdin' church 'n the cook shack Sunday afternoon—well, Sunday's my day o' rest, an' I don't aim t' spoil it by goin' t' church."

"Le's go in—an' see whut's up.

They went in.

Men," said Elizur Flake, "there's a contest sprung up atween this camp an' t'other Sias camp, over on the Chippewa—Pete

Cherry's camp. The market fer logs has went an' gone sky high an' both the Sias drives'll be run t' Sag'naw—after some o' the logs're dropped off at the Midland mill.

"Now, Sam Sias 's went an' offered a month's extra pay t' ev'ry man in the camp that gits its drive t' Sag'naw first. That's over an' above his reg'lar wages an' the reg'lar break-up an' river bonuses—jus' like reachin' down an' pickin' a month's pay off'm the ground. The drive that gits t' the Point first wins, as ye all know, as that drive'll hev the free run down the Tittabawass' t' Sag'naw. So thing t' do is fer this camp t' beat the Chippewa drive t' the Point."

"Hurraw!" some one yelled.

There were numerous hurraws. That breed of men didn't choke when extra labor was mentioned, and they did enjoy camp contests. Situations such as this meant much more than the month's pay, for when drives raced, merchants and saloon keepers all along the rivers swelled the prizes.

The contest would become an object of extended betting—and the result would be gloriously celebrated. Free drinks for the winners would flow like water. For a day or two no lumberjack would be jailed for fighting.

Merchants, besides cash prizes, would put up shoes and caps and tobacco. The end of the contest would be turned into a gala day. Pride of work, pride of industry, pride of woodsmanlike feats ran high in the old Saginaw logging days.

"Now things're about ekal atween the two camps," Parson Elizur went on. "We're both about twenty-three miles above the Point, an' there's about the same number o' men cuttin' timber. The drives'll be about of a size.

"We got some bad turns t' make on the Tittabawass', but them fellers over on the Chippewa— they got Oxbow Bend t' pass afore they hit the Point. Thing is t' clean up the timber fall, an' hev the cut ready fer the river soon's she drops low enuff. Ev'ry stick ought t' be cut an' trimmed an' top the rollaway time the ice is out."

"Hurraw!" they cried again.

"An' I want t' tell ye ev'rything," Elizur confided. "I got a

special int'rest in this race—an' I'm a man that likes a fair contest. Pete Cherry an' me're in a race fer string boss. There'll be four or five Sias camps next winter. That means there'll be a boss over the hull string o' camps.

"Sam Sias up an' told me he didn't know who t' pick fer string boss—me or Pete—as we both'd earnt the job. So he aims t' let this race decide it. Now ye understand ev'rything—an' maybe some o' you fellers like Pete Cherry better'n ye do me. Well, ye don't haf t' do more'n yer fair day's work if ye don't want—but it's only right fer me t' tell ye how things stand all round. So git in the race if ye want."

Almost every man got in. There were some who refused to speed up, but those who did let themselves out were sufficient to speed operations to a comfortable pitch.

So Elizur Flake, the Preachin' State-o'-Mainer, again started down river with a huge drive of logs. It was the first drive to start down the Tittabawassee that spring. The water was still high, but the river was in its banks. The raw, damp chill of early spring was still in the air.

At the little town of Edenville someone came onto the drive with the news that Pete Cherry's drive was also in the water, pressing on toward the point of land at the junction of the two rivers. The condition of the rivers was such that each camp had had to wait a day or two for a safe recession of high water.

Pete Cherry had stolen a march on Elizur Flake. Pete had set his drive in motion about midnight. Elizur had waited until dawn.

This few hours was a considerable handicap to the Tittabawassee drive. Elizur knew that Pete, by starting at midnight, would arrive at Oxbow Bend during the next forenoon. With careful handling at the Oxbow, only an hour or so would be lost under the average time made in the easier stretches.

Elizur had never heard of a drive being started at night. It was hard work to get off nicely, to get the vast number of logs headed right and a safe distance from the banks, even in daylight. Yes, Pete Cherry had stolen a march.

And Pete Cherry knew how to handle a drive at Oxbow Bend or anywhere else on those rivers. It looked bad for the Tittabawassee camp.

Inhabitants of the little towns along the Tittabawassee were of course partial to Elizur's drive. They cheered him and his men. They gathered in large groups at the treacherous bends to watch breathlessly as the scurrying woodsmen labored with might and main to keep things floating—pushing, pushing, pushing on toward the coveted Point.

Nearly the whole population of Midland was gathered along the banks of the Tittabawassee when the nose of Elizur Flake's drive came into sight. On and on it came, lengthening around the bend, its broad stretches dotted with broad-shouldered men of the woods.

Everyone forgot that these were the men who would soon keep them awake at night, who would fight and roister in the streets. They were struggling heroes today, and were writing local history.

Elizur Flake, big and bearded, gripping a long pike pole, rode the head boom.

"Where's the Chippewa drive?" he shouted.

"Don't know!" came the answer from shore. "Ain't heard since she cleared Sinclair's!"

"When?"

" 'Bout sunup!"

Elizur's heart leaped. If things had gone well, the Chippewa drive should have been almost to the Point—yes, beyond the Point. Absence of news pointed to something amiss up the Chippewa.

The Point was only a mile below Elizur. If he could get the nose of his drive across the mouth of the Chippewa—

Sam Sias, towering half a head above the tallest on shore, appeared from behind the elms bordering the road. He shouted: "You win, Elizur! Pete Cherry's hung up on the Oxbow!"

Hung up on the Oxbow—in broad daylight! A capable woodsman like Pete.

A roar went up as the news spread along the drive. And yet Elizur Flake was conscious of sympathy for Pete Cherry.

Sam Sias had come to the edge of the water. "Come ashore at the mill," he was saying to Elizur, "and I'll take you up Chippewa in my buggy. Pete's stuck bad—think you can help him out. They're fixing to dynamite. Easy run for your drive below here—somebody else can handle it."

Matt Turk worked among the jammed logs at the Oxbow, with only his head above the water. It was almost a hopeless tangle. Matt became aware of many things, down there in the water. He pulled himself up on the drive and sought out his boss, Pete Cherry, alone. Matt dripping and oozing water, said pointedly: "Pete, this bend's be'n deadheaded."

"Deadheaded! Wha—"

"Now ye hadn't better holler," Matt cautioned, and his level gaze held a warning. "It might go hard with ye if I told whut's in my mind. Them deadheads—three four I felt of—they be'n there a long time—say las' spring, eh? I c'n tell by the way they're hooked in the sand.

"I be'n thinkin' it over—time I be'n workin' among 'em—an' I see things plain now. I mind the time we come by here las' spring. Funny things went on then, a raft o' deadheads tore loose by our boom—after some o' yer sneak-face' friends come on the drive t' see ye at Floyd.

"That time ye was on the outs with Parson Elizur. Yer friends must 'a' come along later, Pete—after we went by that night—an' deadheaded the bend with fresh sinkers, thinkin' the drive was tied above. Well, that drive was the las' down las' spring, an' this un is the first this spring. See, Pete?"

Pete Cherry had appeared as a man stunned during this speech. But now he was filled with rage, directed as much against the curious twist of fate as against Matt Turk. He felt a great urge to smash someone, and Matt Turk was the closest. But he did not strike.

"Well," Matt inquired placidly, "what'll we do—dynamite the evidence, er hev a fight right here, an' tell the boys whut it's

about? Suit yerself, Pete. I'm a peaceable man—but the boys won't be peaceable, I bet, if I tell 'em all the funny things I noticed that night las' spring. Ye see, Pete—it's jus' like ye cheated 'em out o' their prizes this spring."

Pete hadn't wholly recovered from the daze. He began: "I got a notion t' knock—"

"Yeh, I know ye hev," Matt intervened. "But ye got a better notion—an' that's t' keep purty still. An' I'm tellin' ye—"

Elizur Flake and Sam Sias appeared from the road above and walked out on the jammed logs. Elizur was something of an expert at dynamiting jams. He dropped into the water among the logs, exploring with his hands and feet. He was joined by Matt Turk. Elizur also discovered the deadheads.

"That's funny," he said, "mighty funny. Deadheads stickin' up, jus' like they be'n put—"

But Matt Turk silenced him, talking rapidly in undertones. Sam Sias leaned close and heard everything. They didn't wish to bring on mob violence. The Chippewa crew would be ugly if they learned just why they lost the race and their prizes.

But the news had leaked out—the first hint—and spread rapidly. Matt Turk's quiet conference with Pete Cherry, the mysterious explorations under water, the strange looks and whispers—all these things had stirred the crew. And some one heard Elizur Flake mention deadheads.

Questions popped. Threats sounded. Suspicion was directed against the Tittabawassee camp. Some one had deadheaded the Oxbow, and—

"Get back there!" Sam Sias roared to the crowding lumberjacks.

But they were not to be put off. They meant to administer a beating to Elizur Flake.

Pete Cherry edged toward the shore. Sam Sias acted quickly. In a few short, sharp sentences he told the men the truth. They howled with growing rage, and turned. But Pete Cherry was on his way.

"Pete!" Parson Elizur called. "I hold nuthin' agin' ye—I'm sorry fer ye!"

But none knew whether Pete heard. He ran swiftly, and, by throwing off pursuit, saved himself from a severe drubbing.

"He ain't got but a few dollars wages coming," Sam Sias said. "He was paid off in camp last week. I guess we're shut of him."

He gazed thoughtfully toward the point in the forest at which Pete Cherry had disappeared, and added: "I never did like the way he looked at a man out of his eyes."

Parson Elizur Flake looked around at the crew. "Looks like ye'll haf t' do sumpin fer these fellers," he said to his employer. "'Twa'n't their fault they lost the race."

"Prizes and bonuses for both camps," Sam Sias rejoined quickly.

Grins of satisfaction appeared all around as Parson Elizur and Matt Turk reached for the dynamite.

Hell Hogan's Funeral

(continued from page 23)

preacher's smoke was a little more'n halfway to Hogan at said meetin'. That tells the tale. The preacher man's standin' there lookin' down towards where Hogan's head has disappeared, while the blood trickles down from his own left ear, which has been nearly shot off. Then he turns slow and moves off towards that sorrel hoss, holsterin' his gun sorter regretful as he goes.

No, of course he ain't no preacher of the gospel, only the six-shooter gospel that our cow country jest had to have.

"May the Good Lord bless yuh, Pecos Allen Baker!" I shouts after 'im.

"A-a-a-men!" says several other hombres, includin' our town marshal.

For, yuh see, we was starin' down into Hell Hogan's grave, at the little round hole powerful clost to the center of his forehead.

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THE STOCKADE

(continued from Page 9)

real emotion) likes big easy gestures, while genuine love isn't so concerned with advertising itself.

You can see that in *The Luck of Roaring Camp.* That a gathering of rough and more or less uncouth, and at least partly malignant characters could make the gesture that these men make sounds fantastic – but such things like that do happen. That it could endure as long as it does and become such a conversion for all of them is not believable at all. The reader (unless he's naive) recognizes the artificial quality here and rather resents being asked to accept such hokum.

Dickins' Scrooge certainly makes a grand gesture; whether his conversion in such a manner is believable is something else. It's easier to allow the possibility that one person might thus be converted, without relapsing into his former habits after a while, than a hundred or so all at once. Well, we know that Scrooge was determined, and the sort of person who got what he went after; but I don't entirely believe Dickins' intimations that there were no even minor or momentary relapses. Nonetheless, one thing that makes Dickins' sentimentality acceptable – or at least endurable – and allows us to consider him a great, a first-rate author despite this flaw is his other strengths; and high among them is the fact that he puts so much of himself into his writings; we know, for example, that there are strong autobiographical elements in *Oliver Twist, David Copperfield,* and the *Pickwick Papers.*

And perhaps there is a clue to what is missing in Harte's contrived entertainments, which remain entertaining, but little more. When Bret Harte came East and people met him, they were astonished. He was nothing at all like what they expected. They read such stories as *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, and expected to see an awkward, perhaps somewhat uncouth bear of a man with a big heart, perhaps, but something of a barely-literate slob. They met a polished Westerner, full of charm – no sissy, but not the sunbaked, snow-burned, perhaps slightly scarred veteran of the wilds that was expected. Because, you see, Harte had not put himself into his stories at all; he was really quite aloof in respect to the characters he wrote about and this may be part of the reason why they all seem contrived. While, on the other hand, people who met Charles Dickins weren't disappointed that way at all – even though Dickins was a magnificent amateur actor, who could read selections from his stories so convincingly that you almost thought Mr. Dickins had been transformed into Sam Weller or Scrooge or David Copperfield, etc. But the accounts of his personality are such that we can believe that people found his stories believable, because there was so much of the man himself in them.

In short, for all his charm (and he got along famously in society abroad), Bret Harte was a humbug; and when people began to see through his tricks, he had to go elsewhere and find another audience which hadn't yet caught on to them. Not that he meant to be a charlatan. He labored hard over plays and novels, but none were successful and, I am told, showed all the faults but few of the virtues of his California tales. You'll find the real Bret Harte in his letters.

A story is a marshalling and mastering

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of emotions, not a marshalling and mastering of facts – true: Dubious or outright invented facts won't necessarily kill an otherwise sound story – but counterfeit emotion can eventually sink it, at least for the discriminating reader. Consider Shakespeare's *Richard III.* The odds are that the playwright believed he was drawing his chief character reasonably close to the historical truth – the histories available to him were official Tudor documents which presented Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, as a monster. We know today that Henry VII was among the first (if not the very first) modern monarchs to set up an efficient propaganda machine producing history rewritten to his order. Richard may still be considerably below sainthood, but he was hardly the total horror that the play makes him out to be. Yet, nonetheless, it's a great play, simply because true emotion is marshalled and mastered to the point where it doesn't matter whether the background details are reliable. So let's not call it history as our predecessors did; it has power that triumphs over its defects.

Now it may seem to you that we've spent a lot of words arriving at the conclusion that Bret Harte and his stories are hardly worth talking about it all – but here's where the surprise comes in. For while he was "played out" rather early, and wound up a failure so far as being a great author in his own time and country is concerned, in another respect he was a resounding success whose influence has been with us ever since the middle of the last century.

The '20s, '30s, and '40s were the days of the western pulp magazines in this century, and while I may not have read a million western pulp stories since 1942, when I became editor of a number of western magazines, I've certainly read

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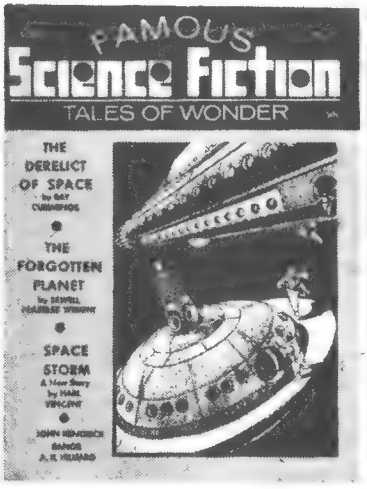

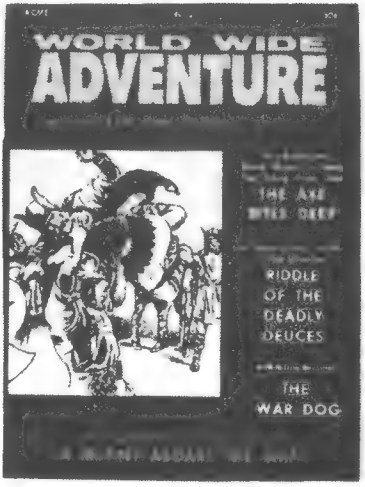

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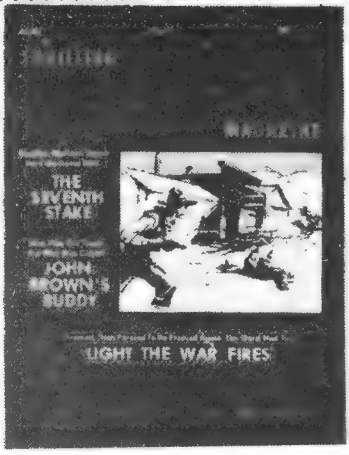
thousands, both published and unpublished. And nearly all, in one way or another, show the influence of Bret Harte. As Stegner put it: "SinceHarte, it has been next to impossible for a writer to present a Western gambler who has not some of the self-contained poise, readiness, and chivalry of Jack Hamlin and John Oakhurst. . . . Since Harte showed the world how, every horse-opera stage driver has driven with the picturesque recklessness and profanity of Yuba Bill." And you can run down the list of "typical" characters in the vast majority of Western pulp stories published in this century; you'll find they are all variations on Harte's original constructions.

Were there ever any people like these at all? There may have been, but if so most likely they were individuals – not prototypes. Did people talk like Harte's characters? Mark Twain, who was a close observer, and whose exaggerations are based on a bedrock of authenticity, once remarked that the dialect employed by Harte's characters was one that "no one on heaven or earth ever used till Harte invented it."

More than that: western story authors by the dozens lived in the East and wrote hundreds of thousands of words – millions, in fact – about a West they had never seen and which, in fact, never existed. They got their notions about the West and its people from Bret Harte and his followers, from reading popular so-called "true stories" which were mostly legend, in some instances from reliable history, and from reading the stories of other writers in the magazines. They took Harte's occupational stereotypes and worked them until their typewriters wore out or the markets collapsed.

Some of them wrote some very good stories, free from Harte's faults. And some, after enjoying a pile of relatively easy money (just relatively – competent



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fiction writing, even for the old pulps, was *work*) tried to go on to better things. A few succeeded, but more found themselves in the same predicament that Harte did; all they could write was just more stories about a never-never-land West for markets which wanted nothing different. I remember one of them who started writing for the pulps in the so-called golden era; by this time, while the markets were twice as many, the rates of payment had dropped way down, so that he had to write more than twice the length in order to earn what a short story would have brought him back then. He was always trying to do something better – but it never came off. Most of the other magazines had tight formulas; I remember one story which he submitted to my magazines and which he said had been rejected by his usual markets. He didn't want to rewrite it and they insisted; he was willing to sell it for less than half his rate elsewhere if I liked it and would run it as it was.

It was a good story, and I couldn't imagine what was wrong with it, in other editors' eyes. That was because I was a cub editor myself and hadn't been trained thoroughly in all the formulas and tabus of western pulps. I didn't know that you just *couldn't* have a bad man doing anything good in a western story. Not in the best-paying pulps.

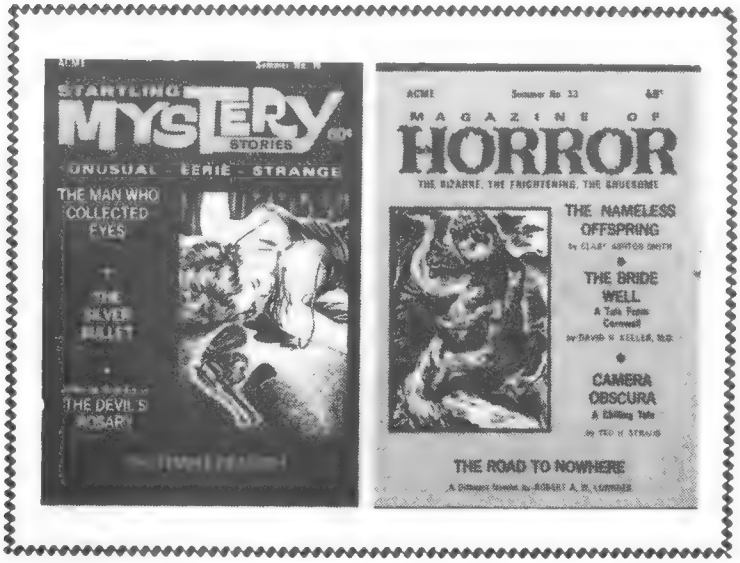
Bret Harte died without realizing what he had started. But what has he to offer us today? Humor. Not so much uproarious comedy, although we see that his fame was set with a poem that had people laughing until it hurt. No – rather the wry and sometimes sardonic type of humor that you find in people who have to sink or swim in rough-and-ready situations with no easy way out. It's akin to ghetto humor (from the great Jewish ghettos in Europe), and to what we call today black humor. Some of it is too tragic to be funny, yet too funny to be quite tragic.

And despite occasional faults, Bret Harte has a clean, clear, and pithy style; his stories move along. Read some of the other writers of the times (if you can) and try to imagine them telling *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in less than three times the length – but without adding anything of real importance. Few of them could do it if their lives depended upon it. (That is where Harte's training paid off; he learned much of great value to him in writing his *Condensed Novels.*)

It is in his parody and satire that we come the closest to something genuine – right in the middle of a laughably contrived scene will come a little touch which is believable, because while you've never known anyone like these puppets on the whole, you have seen actual people react with very similar humor in tough situations not entirely unlike these.

Despite everything, Harte has lasted, and I think he'll continue to last. His short tales have a vividness about them, however contrived they may be. You get the feeling sometimes that even if people didn't talk this way, they should have done so; even if the backgrounds are really rather vague, they grip the imagination. Today we no longer confuse these stories with documentaries, and that is all to the good. A story should not be a documentary; it should not even try to be one. We ourselves (how many of us have done extended, painstaking research into the facts of the Old West?) are much in the same position as were the happy Bret Harte fans in England and Germany with whom the exposes had not yet caught up.

We have heard, to change the metaphor, that the magician doesn't really create a rabbit in his hat. But we can still enjoy the show, because we can't catch him in his tricks. RAWL



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The Peace Pipe

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Sam Acton writes from St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada: "Having read hundreds of westerns years ago, I consider all these stories 'tops', especially when you cannot get a good western magazine now. I hope it warrents continuity.

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Art Washburn writes from Boise, Idaho: "I'm not the over-serious type, and I like a touch of humor in a good western story, like *The Bullhorn Bet,* for instance, but please refrain from the kind you had in *Baldy Sours Takes the Count.* I guess the author thought it was funny. I just thought it was stupid. Worse than the junk that passes for humor on TV shows. Am I all alone?"

Well, you're the first to complain about the *Baldy Sours Takes the Count* sort of story, Mr. Washburn, but that's all I can tell you right now. So if any more of you out there beyond the campfire agree, how's about coming in and saying so? I don't want to displease any of you if I can avoid it, but you know there's just no such thing as pleasing everybody perfectly all the time. It wouldn't do to say we'll positively have no more stories like that one, ever again, if it turned out that a lot of you liked the story and wanted to read more of this kind of zany humor.

So how can we figure out what to do? Well, here's the way the editor sees it. First of all, we don't have such a high number of stories of this type available, so there's no danger of anyone seeing an example issue after issue after issue. We have one positive dislike registered. Now if a number of other readers write in agreeing with you—and *no one* says contrariwise,—then we'll assume that the silent majority doesn't really care that much and go along with the nays. After all, the readers who care enough to take the trouble to tell me what they like are

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going to get first consideration from me; I'll assume that the rest aren't too dissatisfied.

On the other hand, if a lot of readers ask for more stories like that one, then I'll try to find some more. And if it's a sort of close thing, then I'll still try to find some more, but not so often.

So thanks very much for raising the issue, Mr. Washburn, and let's hear how the rest of you feel about it.

Greg Abbott writes from Hawaii: "What I like best about *THRILLING WESTERN MAGAZINE* is the variety. Of course, if the stories weren't good, most of them, it wouldn't make any difference, but I remember some of the older western pulp magazines and they were pretty much of all of a piece. Good once in awhile, but I got tired of reading just about cowboys or just about one period of the West or just stories taking place beyond the Rockies. When I pick up TWM, I feel that there's going to be some stories that are different from the usual run, like a western railroad story, or a river story, or a Canadian story, or an animal story. I like straight westerns of the more limited kind, sure—wouldn't have picked up the magazine at all if I didn't—but the reason why I want to get every issue is that I'm not going to get surfeited unless you change your policy and get restricted the way the magazines used to be. I sure hope you don't."

Well, we don't intend to narrow down, Mr. Abbott, and the only thing that could persuade us to get as specialized as the old western pulps (some of them, please note, not *all* of them) used to be would be if stacks of letters came in from readers saying that they *didn't* want so wide a spread.

Confidentially, I don't see that happening; I'd say the odds were well in your favor that TWM will keep its wide-open policy. RAWL

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